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the Preamble*

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Past national chaplain reflects on the founding spirit of The American Legion. *By Tierian "Randy" Cash*

BELOVED KANSAS SON

The Kansas American Legion and Kansas American Legion Auxiliary led an annual tribute to President Dwight Eisenhower at the Eisenhower Presidential Museum and Library in Abilene, Kan., on Oct. 13. The Eisenhower Pilgrimage, which began in 1982, is held on the Saturday closest to Eisenhower's birthday, Oct. 14. Photo by Schelly Stone

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legion.org/legiontv

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Leo Garcia, an Air Force veteran and member of American Legion Post 8 in Las Vegas, participates in a Merging Vets & Players workout at Xtreme Couture MMA. Photo by Ronda Churchill



The American Legion Magazine, a leader among national general-interest publications, is published monthly by The American Legion for its 2 million members. These wartime veterans, working through 13,000 community-level posts, dedicate themselves to God and Country and traditional American values; strong national security; adequate and compassionate care for veterans, their widows and orphans; community service; and the wholesome development of our nation's youth.

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THE AMERICAN Legion

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Photo by Chet Strange

'Never Again'

I am writing in regard to Ken Olsen's article (October). For decades, VA had an Office of Construction Management (OCM) that was staffed with project managers, architects, engineers, estimators, planners and resident engineers. The OCM directed public architectural/engineering companies in the development of major construction projects, from the preliminary phase to the completion of construction. Each project was assigned OCM staff to work with the firms. OCM also conducted final inspections, post-occupancy evaluations (to learn from mistakes), and developed its own construction criteria. Almost all these projects were on time and on budget, due to the competence and dedication of the professionals in OCM. Sadly, in the 1990s, Congress allocated less and less to VA major-construction funding and phased out the OCM.

I want veterans and Rep. Mike Coffman to know that VA is quite capable of oversight for its major-construction program, if only Congress would allocate the funds to fully staff the OCM.

— Chester Hebble, Crofton, Md.

I am sad to read of the bad experiences many have had with VA. I can only say that my experiences with the Jackson, Miss., VA have been positive.

I was diagnosed with prostate cancer seven years ago. I had enrolled in the VA system years prior to that, and knew that my service as an infantryman in Vietnam meant that my cancer would be deemed related to Agent Orange exposure. In the process, a VA representative asked, "Do you have ringing in your ears or any hearing loss?"

I said yes, both. He told me to wait until the prostate cancer issue was settled and then apply

to VA for hearing aids. He said that, in his experience, hearing loss or tinnitus or both suffered by Vietnam infantry veterans was almost always ruled service connected. And it was.

This is not to say that VA providers don't make mistakes or even act uncaring at times, but non-VA providers do, too. If there were only the VA system and the even bigger non-VA system (rather than thousands of non-VA providers), the bad press generated by the problems with the non-VA system would surpass those of VA's. And I do not favor privatizing it.

— Glynn Kegley, Florence, Miss.

Supreme Court's Janus ruling

I agree with the Court's *Janus* ruling, and with Rep. Virginia Foxx's support of it (Big Issues, October). The ruling struck a blow for individual freedom. What I find troubling is the inability of politicians like Rep. Bobby Scott to comprehend what freedom is, and what it means to people living in a free country.

— Doug Lansing, Maiden Rock, Wis.

Yes, non-union municipal employees did pay an "agency fee." That fee was to cover not only collective bargaining, but protection under the contract for disputes over insurance and pension issues, working conditions and wages. The union represents every employee covered by its contract. Proper processing of insurance claims, working conditions relating to employee safety, wages, work hours and overtime as defined by the contract are other things the union deals with on behalf of all employees.

If you want to vote on issues, be a union member. The same people who are screaming about outsiders voting in our elections complain about outsiders not being able to vote on union issues. Any service-fee payer is entitled to a refund on the portion of his or her fee used for non-employment-related expenditures.

Much of what we have today came through collective bargaining. Everyone should participate in the costs if they want the protection the contract provides.

— Phil Pakiela, Gowen, Mich.

Besides the military, labor unions are probably the second most important organization to Americans. Unfortunately, students and the general public are not informed and continually reminded that things like vacations, holidays, health care, wages and benefits are all because of labor unions.

Rep. Virginia Foxx says it is a well-known fact that "fees collected by unions were used for political speech purposes." That is inaccurate. If you are a full dues-paying member, a small portion might be spent on political donations. If and when they are, it is approved by the membership and in almost all cases goes to candidates who support issues that benefit the union members.

I wonder if Foxx knows that labor unions are obligated to represent non-members in grievances too. Is it fair for the labor organization and dues-paying members to cover these costs? She should also know that represented employees earn significantly more than unrepresented employees. Republicans are usually opposed to individuals receiving what they refer to as entitlements. But representation, wages and fringe benefits without payment to support the organization that provides them are bigger entitlements than any other.

This case is just another attempt to lower the economic status of the middle class and make the rich richer. I wonder when American workers will have had enough.

— James Kasmer, Palos Heights, Ill.

Progress of Blue Water bill

On Tom Philpott's article (Veterans Update, October), I served aboard USS *Franklin D. Roosevelt* in the Gulf of Tonkin in 1966 and 1967, and remember many times walking through the mess deck and stopping at one of two water coolers. The taste of the water was nasty, like it was contaminated. Agent Orange? I guess we'll never know.

— John M. Fray, Rye, N.Y.

I served with Target Squadron VC-3 out of Naval Air Station North Island, San Diego. In 1969, I was assigned to Da Nang Air Base in Vietnam. A year later, I returned to North Island.

In 2012, I was diagnosed with prostate cancer and mantle cell non-Hodgkin lymphoma. Both are attributable to Agent Orange exposure. I have gone through chemotherapy, a stem cell transplant, radiation treatments and surgery. In 2015, I had surgery and was treated with radiation due to a recurrence of the lymphoma. Initially I was awarded 100 percent disability, but by not having the "correct" levels of anemia, my status was changed and put at 30 percent.

My wife and I have two daughters. Both, along with my grandson, were diagnosed with Crohn's disease. There is no history of this disease in either of our families.

In my opinion, the government and VA do everything they can to ignore those of us who were exposed to Agent Orange. I feel lucky to still receive 30 percent, as many receive nothing.

— Jeffrey J. Eller, Dillsboro, Ind.

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115th Congress set a high standard

In an era when political attacks often overshadow public policy, I offer praise for a body that rarely receives it: the U.S. Congress.

The 115th Congress has been one of the most veteran-friendly sessions we have seen in two decades. This is not a statement about which party is responsible, but rather the ability of Republicans and Democrats to work together and improve the quality of life for the men and women who have defended our nation through military service.

In 2017, Congress passed the Accountability and Whistleblower Protection Act, which allows the VA secretary to move more quickly to fire employees who fail to serve veterans in a professional or competent manner. It also protects VA employees who alerted the public or their workplace superiors to improprieties.

Next came the Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act, which President Trump signed on stage of the 99th American Legion National Convention in Reno, Nev., in August 2017. The Legion spent years working to modernize the antiquated appeals process. Had the legislation not passed, veterans filing an appeal could have expected to wait an average of 10 years to hear a decision. The legislation passed the House 418-0 and by unanimous consent in the Senate.

These results do not happen by accident. In these cases, they are due to the bipartisan efforts of Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs Chairman Sen. Johnny Isakson, R-Ga., Ranking Member Sen. Jon Tester, D-Mont., House Committee on Veterans' Affairs Chairman Rep. Phil Roe, R-Tenn., Ranking Member Rep. Tim Walz, D-Minn., and other allies in Congress. They also happen because of the enormous clout of The American Legion. Combine the advocacy efforts of our Legislative Commission and Legislative Council with the activism of a 3 million-member strong American Legion Family, and you can make a difference.

We continue to do just that. In 2017, Congress passed the Choice Extension Act, ensuring that veterans can seek care close to home or find alternative providers when VA isn't able to provide timely or needed care. Moreover, The American Legion welcomed passage of the Harry W. Colmery "Forever" GI Bill, named for our past national commander, who drafted the original Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944. The new law eliminates many of the previous deadlines set for veterans to use the educational benefits they had earned. Finally, consider what the recently passed VA MISSION Act will do for thousands of veterans and their families, streamlining eight community care programs into one and expanding caregiver benefits to pre-9/11 veterans.

Much work remains. Our flag still needs constitutional protection, government agencies continue to skirt veterans preference hiring laws, and female veterans do not yet have the full range of the gender-specific health care they've earned. We will continue to encourage lawmakers to serve veterans in a manner worthy of their sacrifice. But the 115th Congress and the White House deserve credit for great progress toward advancing the cause of veterans, their families and the U.S. military. This is the new standard for future congresses.



National Commander
Brett P. Reistad

MEMORANDA

HOLIDAY DONOR BLOOD DRIVE

The American Legion's Holiday Donor Blood Drive runs from Nov. 22 to Dec. 31. According to the Red Cross, about 36,000 units of red blood cells are needed every day in the United States, with someone needing blood every two seconds. One donation may save up to three lives. In 2017-2018, 48,100 American Legion donors gave 73,952 pints of blood.

legion.org/security/blood

SEASON OF GIVING

Share how your American Legion post is engaged in helping the less fortunate this holiday season. Submit stories and pictures in the "Why I Love My Post" category at the Legiontown website.

legiontown.org

WAS YOUR POST NAMED FOR A WORLD WAR I VETERAN?

The U.S. World War One Centennial Commission is interested in hearing about American Legion posts named for World War I veterans. Contact David Hamon, the commission's VSO/military director, with information, stories and photos at david.hamon@worldwar1centennial.org or (540) 379-8584.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brett P. Reistad".



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DERRIC GRIMES

When he left the Army three years ago, Derric Grimes knew he wanted to continue to serve his nation and community in some way. He's found plenty of opportunities at American Legion Post 116 in Fuquay-Varina, N.C.

"What drew me into the Legion was its focus on family," says Grimes, who is pulling double duty as commander of Post 116 and District 11. "You see that in our programs."

Ten years ago, the post had 250 members. Now, driven by its commitment to community, Post 116 is North Carolina's largest post, with 918 members in a town of 25,000.

The post's Cruisers Club hosts semi-annual classic car shows that help recruit new members and generate goodwill in the community. The Post 116 family also sponsors a Boy Scout troop, cleans up highway trash, donates to school arts programs, participates in suicide prevention walks and much more.

"Having my family be a part of The American Legion has been a growth opportunity," says Grimes, whose daughters, Savannah, 6, and Charlotte, 3, are in the Junior Auxiliary. "They see that this is an organization they can be a part of and give back."

At the post's monthly fish fries, Savannah passes out tartar sauce and ketchup. "She knows that it's something she can do and it helps," her dad says. "I didn't ask her if she wanted to do it. Setting the example for them taught her to volunteer."

— Henry Howard

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AMERICAN LEGION POST Post 116, Fuquay-Varina, N.C.

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Creation of U.S. Space Force



SUPPORT

Rep. Steve Scalise, R-La.

■ Scalise is a member of the House Energy and Commerce Committee.



OPPOSE

Rep. Seth Moulton, D-Mass.

■ Moulton is a member of the House Armed Services Committee.

In September 1918, Army Col. William "Billy" Mitchell led nearly 1,500 Allied aircraft in one of the first large-scale air-ground attacks in history at the Battle of Saint-Mihiel, France. What Mitchell knew then, and others later realized, was that warfare had forever changed and air superiority would play a pivotal role in all future conflicts. World War II proved this to be true, and in 1947 Congress passed the National Security Act, creating, among other things, the U.S. Air Force.

A century later, it is necessary for us to build a modern and adaptive force able to protect our nation from current, emerging and future threats. Our way of life depends on technology, from instantaneous global communications to GPS signals for timing and navigation, and all these depend on a constellation of satellites that enable our modes of transportation, commerce and banking. While space may not currently be a contested environment, our adversaries seek new ways to challenge our security. Our military's ability to defend these interests and guarantee our unfettered access to space is a critical national-security priority, and it is imperative we maintain the technological advantage.

It is for these reasons that I support President Trump's vision for a Space Force and look forward to working with Secretary James Mattis, the Department of Defense and congressional leaders to provide our men and women in uniform the resources and authorities they need to accelerate our space capabilities. While many challenges remain, I am confident that the sixth branch of our armed forces will follow in the legacy of our other services, led by dedicated Americans committed to protecting our freedoms.

THE HEART OF THE ISSUE

President Trump announced a plan to create a separate military service for space. Supporters say the Space Force is necessary to guard against new and future threats. Critics say a new branch would be duplicative and a waste of resources.

When I served in Iraq, we had to rummage through corroded rounds from the Vietnam War to load our magazines for the invasion. They gave us woodland-camo chemical weapons suits for the hot brown desert (we joked that they must be saving the desert camo for Korea). We skated by on one, maybe two MREs per day for the first month in the sweltering Iraqi heat. But it's not like our military wasn't well-funded. The problem was that Congress spent your taxpayer money in the

wrong places, on the wrong things – and seemed to forget the infantry in the process.

Fifteen years later, we are poised to make that mistake again with the creation of a Space Force. This new force will cost \$13 billion over the first five years, which might be a reasonable price tag if we didn't already have one. Across the country, Air Force Space Command has thousands of capable airmen and women defending us from air and space threats. Their job is crucial not just for national defense but for everyday communications, media and entertainment, and tools like GPS that we depend on. Protecting those intertwined networks is their mission, and we should trust them to do it.

Instead of wasting money setting up a new bureaucracy, we need to develop next-generation capabilities like hypersonic weapons, artificial intelligence and cyber defense. We need to invest in education and advanced research programs to maintain our role as the leader of the free world with the strongest military ever known.

That's why I'm opposed to the Space Force. There are plenty of smart places to spend money to make us stronger and safer. There's no reason to spend it on something we already have.

CONTACT YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS

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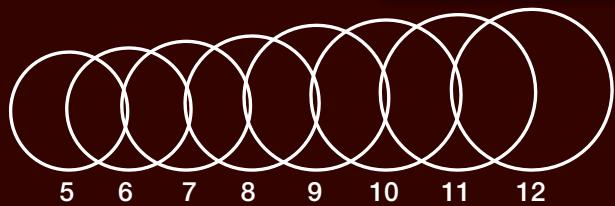
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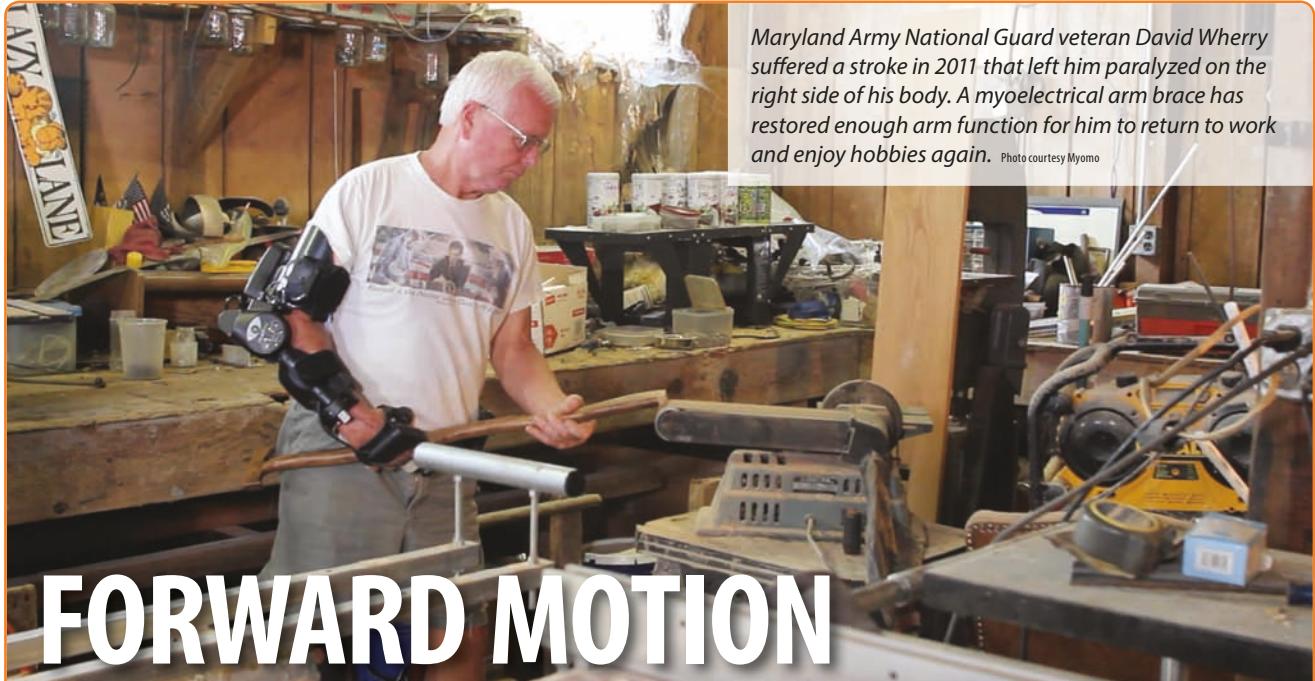
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Maryland Army National Guard veteran David Wherry suffered a stroke in 2011 that left him paralyzed on the right side of his body. A myoelectrical arm brace has restored enough arm function for him to return to work and enjoy hobbies again. Photo courtesy Myomo

FORWARD MOTION

Robotic arm gives stroke survivor his life back.

BY BETH W. ORENSTEIN

As many as nine in 10 stroke survivors suffer some degree of paralysis immediately after their strokes. Army National Guard veteran David Wherry of Maryland is one of them. He lost all movement on his right side after he suffered a stroke in 2011, when he was 61.

Wherry, who at the time owned an HVAC business, had come home for lunch. His wife looked at him and knew something was wrong. "I told her, 'I don't feel right, but nothing hurts,'" he recalls.

At her insistence, they went to the hospital, where doctors performed a few tests, and Wherry was kept overnight. "When I woke up the next morning, I couldn't move my right side," he says. "I'd had a stroke overnight in the hospital."

Wherry has diabetes and high blood pressure, which are risk factors for stroke. Although he's on medication to control these conditions, he didn't listen to his body, he admits. "I have only one person to blame, and that's me."

After a week in the hospital, Wherry was transferred to a rehabilitation center in Wilmington, Del.

With limited movement on his right side, Wherry had to give up his business and let the woodworking tools he loved gather dust in his basement. Playing with his seven grandchildren was out, too.

Depressed but determined to improve, Wherry sought help from VA. At one of his rehab sessions, a physical therapist said he would be a good candidate for a MyoPro robotic arm, which is designed to restore function to weakened or paralyzed arms of patients suffering from stroke and other diseases and injuries. Through noninvasive sensors on the arm, the device recognizes the electric

signals the patient's muscles send and helps restore them.

"It gets your muscles and your brain working together," Wherry says.

RESTORED FUNCTION Wherry was eligible for the MyoPro through VA. The challenge was finding the right people there and at the University of Maryland, where he was being treated, to authorize it. His persistence paid off. He has had the MyoPro arm for about 18 months and says it's made a huge difference for him – physically and emotionally.

"Since I got MyoPro, my life has really gained some more direction," he says.

Wherry is able to help around the house – loading and unloading the dishwasher, and doing laundry – and play with his grandchildren again. He's even been able to return to work, riding along with other HVAC technicians for a friend's business and offering them advice and instruction at their job sites.

Wherry hopes the MyoPro will restore even more arm function over time, allowing him to do even more. He uses the robotic arm a couple hours a day, three to four times a week. "I was told the object of the arm is to get rid of it," Wherry says. "It is supposed to help you along and make your natural movement and action better and, for me, it has and it does. I'm not to the point yet where I can make use of it less, but I can see that day coming."

Before he started using the arm, Wherry couldn't make a fist, he says. "Now I can not only make a fist, but I can open it most of the way."

See **STROKE** on page 16



Treating your COPD and still struggling?

Chronic productive cough? Repeated antibiotic use for chest infections?



These may be indicators of bronchiectasis—a common but frequently undiagnosed condition caused by chronic inflammation of the airways.¹

COPD is about four times more prevalent among veterans than in the general population.² Half of people with serious COPD may have bronchiectasis.³



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1. Maselli DJ, Amalakuan B, Keyt H, Diaz AA. Suspecting non-cystic fibrosis bronchiectasis: What the busy primary care clinician needs to know. *Int J Clin Pract.* 2017;71(2):e12924.

2. Basu S, VA/DoD Issue First COPD Guideline Update Since 2007. *U.S. Medicine.* 2015.

3. Martínez-García MA, de la Rosa Carrillo D, Soler-Cataluña JJ, et al. Prognostic value of bronchiectasis in patients with moderate-to-severe chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. *Am J Respir Crit Care Med.* 2013;187:823–831.

A friend in need

Pet owners facing high vet bills have options.

BY STEPHANIE BOUCHARD

When your pet gets sick or falls victim to an accident, it's scary. Scary because you're worried for your pet – and because you're not sure how you're going to afford the veterinary bills.

Veterinary medical care, like human health care, can get expensive quickly even if you have pet insurance. If you're faced with an unexpected veterinary bill that you can't afford, financial aid options are available, says Nicole Forsyth, president and CEO of RedRover, a California-based nonprofit that aids animals in distress.

Fundraising Traditional ideas include bake sales, garage sales, posting flyers or collection jars at your veterinarian's office or local shelter (with their permission), and taking out an ad in local newspapers. More people are raising money online, too, using tools like Facebook or GoFundMe.

Grants These are usually awarded based on medical urgency, financial need, available funding and eligibility. Many grants are for small amounts – RedRover's relief grants average \$200 – so you will likely have to apply for more than one.

Financial assistance Several organizations offer financial aid for veterinary care. One that works specifically with veterans is Dogs on Deployment, a California-based nonprofit that places pets of deployed servicemembers with foster families for temporary care. It also offers limited financial assistance, but be aware that it can take months for applications to be processed.

Arrangements with your veterinary office Some may be able to arrange a payment plan for you, or may be willing to barter.

Comparison shop Veterinary care costs vary widely, so it might be worth shopping around, Forsyth says.

Low-cost veterinary clinics These may be run by local nonprofits or veterinary schools. Ask your veterinarian or local shelter workers if they know of low-cost clinics nearby.

*Stephanie Bouchard is a Maine-based freelance writer.
stephaniebouchard.net*

Learn more about managing veterinary care costs:

 redrover.org
 humanesociety.org
 aspca.org
 paws.org



Photo by Maddie McGarvey

Living Well is designed to provide general information. It is not intended to be, nor is it, medical advice. Readers should consult their physicians when they have health problems.



Photo courtesy Myomo

STROKE *continued from page 14*

He's also able to practice woodworking again. His latest project is making walking canes for people like him, who due to a stroke or other condition have limited use of a limb. In the first four months with his MyoPro, Wherry was able to make 20 canes.

Wherry wants to get a robotic device for his ankle, and is enrolled in another program that may make it possible someday. His goal is a full recovery, and he is optimistic. "You've got to make up your mind and do what you can to better yourself," he says.

STROKE SIGNS Someone in the United States suffers a stroke every four minutes, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Every minute a stroke goes untreated and blood flow to the brain is blocked, a person loses 1.9 million neurons. As a result, he or she can lose speech, movement, memory and other functions.

Know the signs of a stroke and seek immediate medical attention if you suspect you or someone else is experiencing one.

According to the National Stroke Association, symptoms of a stroke include, but are not limited to, sudden:

- Weakness or numbness in your face, arm or leg, especially on one side of your body.
- Confusion or trouble speaking or understanding what others are saying.
- Trouble seeing in one or both of your eyes.
- Trouble walking, dizziness, or loss of balance and coordination.
- Severe headache with no obvious cause.

Note the time so you can tell a doctor when the first symptoms occurred. Timing is critical when treating a stroke. The sooner you receive treatment, the greater your chances of a full recovery.

Beth W. Orenstein of Northampton, Pa., is a freelance medical writer and regular contributor to Living Well.

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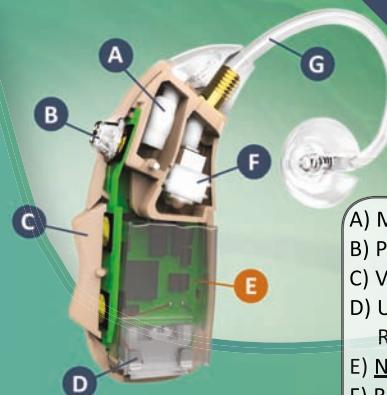
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5 HIDDEN SKI GEMS

Go off the beaten snow path.

BY LYN METTLER

Crested Butte, Colo. Photo by Trent Bona

If long lift lines and crowded slopes aren't your idea of a ski vacation, check out these fantastic winter getaways that most Americans have yet to fully discover.

Crested Butte, Colo. Between Grand Junction and Colorado Springs is the small town of Crested Butte, a far cry from busy ski resorts like Vail and Aspen. There's more than 1,500 acres of skiable terrain, with half the mountain dedicated to beginner and intermediate skiers. When you're not racing down the slopes, enjoy the distinct Western vibe of this former mining town, where many original miner shacks stand behind newer homes on city streets. Some historic structures, most dating to the 1880s, include the Masonic Hall, St. Patrick's Church and Crested Butte Mountain Heritage Museum, originally a blacksmith's shop.

Mount Hood, Ore. Imagine skiing with a grand mountain in the background. Outdoor adventurers enjoy these and other spectacular views in the winter playground that is Mount Hood. Timberline Lodge & Ski Area has the longest ski season in North America, and Mt. Hood Skibowl has the country's largest night-ski area, along with Cosmic Tubing illuminated by colored LED lights – fun for kids and adults.

Wildcat Mountain Resort, Gorham, N.H. In the Northeast, try skiing Wildcat Mountain in White Mountain National Forest. It has the state's longest

green beginner trail, one of New Hampshire's longest ski seasons and a high-speed chairlift that delivers you to the summit in less than seven minutes. The 'Cat is known for its great views of Mount Washington, Tuckerman Ravine and the surrounding Presidential Range.

Boyne Highlands Resort, Harbor Springs, Mich. Located at the top of Michigan, close to Canada, Boyne Highlands Resort has five terrain parks with a halfpipe, jumps, boxes and rails, as well as 20 miles of cross-country skiing trails and 55 runs with lengths of up to 1.25 miles. Visitors can also enjoy winter horseback rides, zip-lining, sledding and ice skating in Harbor Springs, which averages 140 inches of snowfall. Resort accommodations include hotel rooms and an inn, as well as townhome and vacation rentals.

Telluride, Colo. The views while skiing don't get any better than Telluride, an out-of-the-way town in southwestern Colorado served by only a handful of airlines. Set in a box canyon and surrounded by the peaks of the San Juan Mountains, Telluride has an above-town ski resort with a free gondola, backcountry skiing and hike-to terrain. Other activities include snowshoeing, sleigh rides and snowy fat-tire bike rides.

Lyn Mettler is a freelance travel writer who blogs at GotoTravelGal.com.

Do you like to travel with your pet? Compare the Market found that Air France is the [most pet-friendly airline](#), allowing up to three fury (or feathered) companions along for no more than the cost of an extra suitcase. It also found that New York City is the most pet-friendly destination, with no bans on pets of any breed.

For a historic holiday adventure, head to [Gettysburg, Pa.](#), where many attractions have Christmas-themed tours. Highlights include Shriver House's "A Civil War Christmas," and the Eisenhower farm with President Dwight and Mamie Eisenhower's holiday decorations on display throughout their home.



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— J. Fitzgerald, VA



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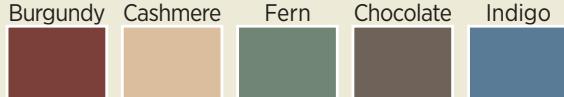
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Retirees gain access to more dental options

BY TOM PHILPOTT

Military retirees can review online features and monthly premiums for a new set of dental plan options available to them to replace the TRICARE Retiree Dental Plan (TRDP), which expires Dec. 31.

Congress voted two years ago to end TRDP and grant 3 million military retiree households access to the same menu of dental plans administered for federal civilian employees by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). Features of those plans and premium rates for 2019 can be viewed online at tricare.benefeds.com.

Retirees will also receive plan information at their last known addresses. They are being offered at least 10 dental plans, but the precise number will vary based on where retirees reside.

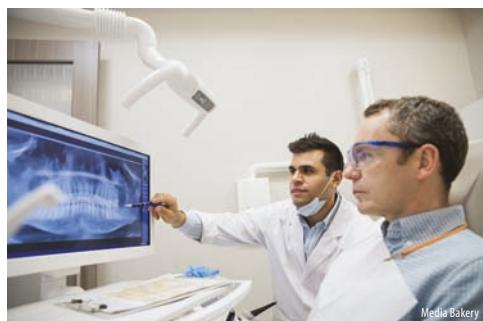
When military retirees and families decide on the plan best for them, they can enroll during an open season that runs through Dec. 10. They can choose self-only coverage, self-plus-one coverage or self-and-family coverage, with premiums set accordingly. New plan coverage will begin Jan. 1.

Military retirees will also be eligible, along with other TRICARE beneficiaries – including families of active-duty personnel, drilling reserve-component personnel and their families – to buy into one of four vision insurance plans offered to federal civilians. For vision insurance, they must first be enrolled in a TRICARE plan.

The combined package for military retirees and their families, and the vision care-only option for most other TRICARE beneficiaries, is more widely known as the Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP).

Patrick Grady, chief of the TRICARE Health Plan, coordinated the FEDVIP launch for TRICARE beneficiaries with OPM officials. Grady says it's important that military retirees understand they must take an active role in transitioning from their expiring dental plan to one of the FEDVIP options.

"They need to get engaged during open season and choose which plan is right for them and their families," Grady says. "This isn't a passive approach anymore. But we're excited about the options they'll have to choose from."



Nearly 840,000 military-retiree households, a total of 1.7 million beneficiaries, relied on TRDP for dental insurance. It was the sole military-backed dental coverage offered to retirees. Delta Dental serviced the contract for the past five years. When Congress ordered that military retirees have access to the same robust menu of dental options as federal civilians, it also directed DoD to work with OPM to offer vision insurance options too, and not only to retirees but other TRICARE beneficiaries.

As with TRDP, premiums and cost shares, including deductibles and copayments, are set so that FEDVIP enrollees fully cover program costs. Although OPM administers the menu of plans, the government isn't subsidizing their benefits.

Military participants can pay premiums through a post-tax allotment from either their monthly basic pay or retirement pay.

The advantage of FEDVIP is the variety of options, Grady says. Some military retirees who work as federal civilians, or have spouses who do, have complained that total out-of-pocket dental costs will rise. That's because until now they have been able to secure dual policies, using TRDP as first payer and FEDVIP as second payer. That dual-coverage option ends Dec. 31.

Dental benefits for active-duty members and families will continue to be provided by military treatment facilities or through separate contracts managed by the Defense Health Agency. Reservists and their families will also continue to purchase a premium-based TRICARE dental plan. United Concordia administers these programs.

Before beneficiaries shop for a FEDVIP plan, they should verify their personal information in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS), including mailing address, marital status and number of dependents, Grady says.

Retirees and other TRICARE beneficiaries can sign up at tricare.benefeds.com to get alerts when new information on FEDVIP is added.

Tom Philpott has been covering military personnel and veterans issues for more than 40 years.

THE VIETNAM VETERANS TRIBUTE COLT .45 PISTOL

FEATURING ARTWORK BY VIETNAM VETERAN AL ALEXANDER | LICENSED BY THE ARMY HISTORICAL FOUNDATION



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To those who fought battles in the steaming jungles of Vietnam. To those who patrolled day and night, with threats of attack at every hour. To those who weathered the ambushes, the village mortar rounds and rifle fire. To those who patrolled the Mekong Delta in PBRs and flew in helicopters. To those in the fields and jungles always on the watch for punji sticks and explosives.

To those who returned home to a divided United States. To those who never returned home. To those who were glued to the nightly news, waiting for news of their father, or husband, or brother, or friend. To those who were drafted. To those who volunteered. To those who served. The Vietnam Veterans Tribute Colt .45 Pistol is dedicated to you.

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Nothing about the Vietnam War was easy. Those who were there remember swampy grasslands, rice paddies, dense

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The left side of the slide features four paintings of Al Alexander's: "Heavy Weight Contenders", "Delta Dragon Ship", "Red LZ" and "Lonely Point". You'll find tanks patrolling a jungle road, Huey helicopter dropping troops in a hot landing zone (a Red LZ), a point man on the lookout as he approaches a river crossing, and a patrol boat engaging the enemy on the river bank. Near the muzzle end, you'll find a banner reading, "Vietnam Veterans Tribute".



The right side features: "Another Day at the Office", "Double Trouble" and "Ringside for a Fast Mover". You'll find a helicopter gunner covering troops on the ground, personnel carriers with troops and helicopters overhead, and a Phantom dropping napalm as troops observe from a distance. You'll also find a banner reading "Lest We Forget, All Gave Some, Some Gave All", in honor of all who served in Vietnam.

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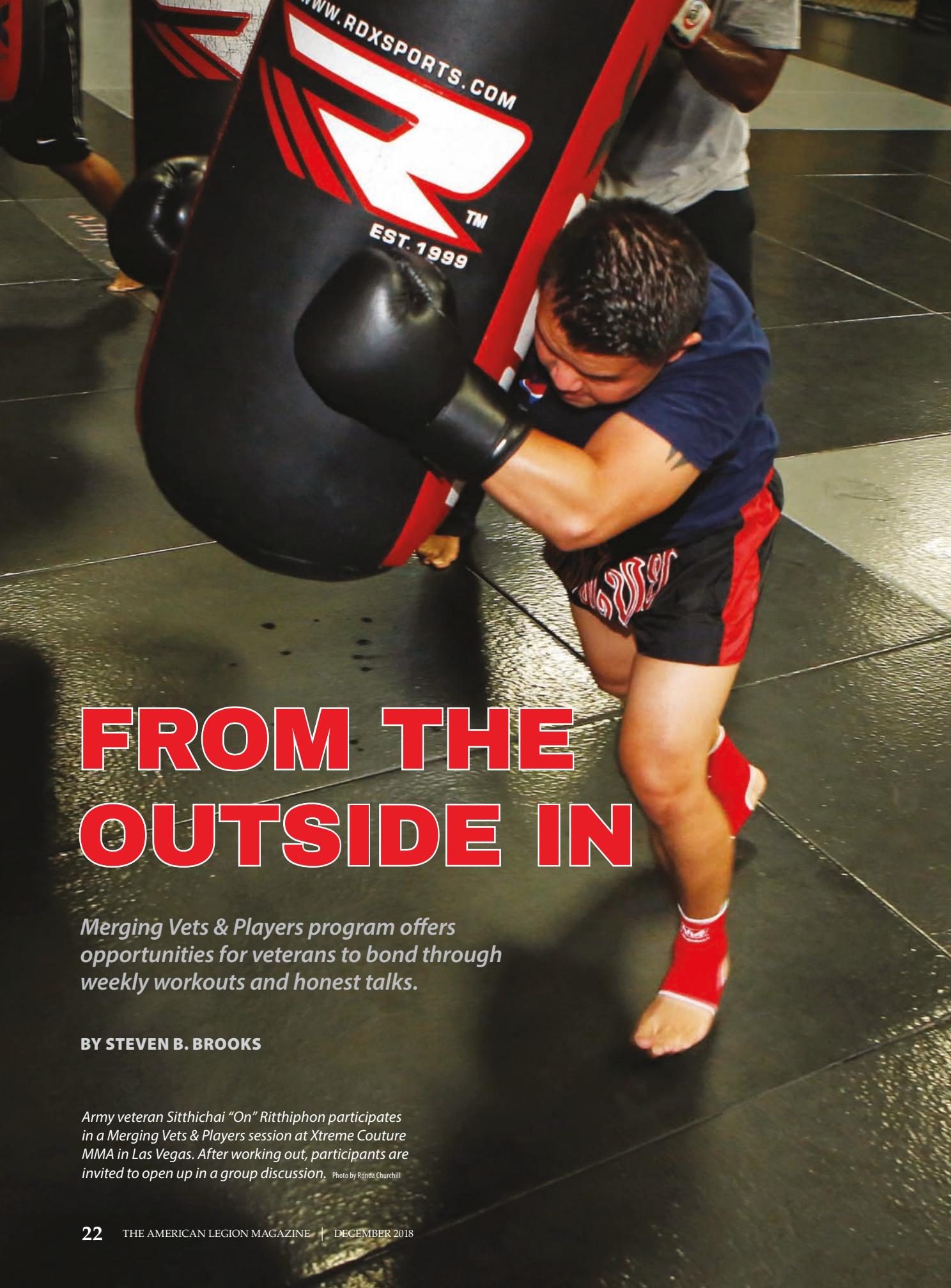
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FROM THE OUTSIDE IN

Merging Vets & Players program offers opportunities for veterans to bond through weekly workouts and honest talks.

BY STEVEN B. BROOKS

Army veteran Sitthichai "On" Ritthiphon participates in a Merging Vets & Players session at Xtreme Couture MMA in Las Vegas. After working out, participants are invited to open up in a group discussion. Photo by Ronda Churchill

David Rendon was in a bad place, and his family knew it.

An Army veteran who served from 2005 to 2016, Rendon was stumbling back toward a past that included substance abuse. “I was starting to get lost,” he says. “I had nowhere to go. After a visit to (a VA facility), my mother told me, ‘You have no life in your eyes.’”

That was then. On this warm July evening in Los Angeles, in the parking lot of Unbreakable Performance Center above Sunset Strip, the life is back in Rendon’s eyes. Surrounded by nearly 40 other veterans – ranging from the post-9/11 era to Vietnam – he’s warming up for another Merging Vets & Players (MVP) session. He’s bouncing around, hugging and shaking hands with people he considers brothers.

“It was almost like a miracle that I found MVP,” says Rendon, a member of Hollywood American Legion Post 43. “The camaraderie. Knowing that I’m in a safe space. It’s allowing me to take that next step in my recovery.

“My mother loves this. She has seen a huge difference when it comes to my attitude, the way I speak, the way I present myself, the way I’m not anxious, the way I’m not depressed. I have more good days than bad days. Now she doesn’t have to worry about me.”

Founded two years ago by Fox Sports NFL and mixed martial arts (MMA) reporter Jay Glazer, MVP brings together veterans and former professional athletes for weekly workout sessions followed by “fireside chats” where no subject is taboo. The owner of Unbreakable, Glazer teamed up with MVP cofounder Nate Boyer – an Army Green Beret veteran and pro football player – to grow the Los Angeles program. Similar programs have started in Las Vegas and Chicago.

MVP combines peer-to-peer mentoring with a workout that includes MMA. Participating weekly helped Army and National Guard veteran Heraclio Aguilar drop from more than 320 pounds to 240, giving him more confidence at a time when he really needed it.

“I knew the direction I wanted to go that fat was not going to be received well,” says Aguilar, also a Post 43 member. “The great thing about this program is that a lot of the veterans who do come, we’re not all on the same set path to get to become a physical trainer or to become something in the movies, become a writer, whatever. We all have different dreams and aspirations.”

MVP’s physical side is what attracted A.J. Perez – a Navy veteran, MVP program coordinator and

Post 43 member – to the program. Immediately, though, he saw the benefits of the chats.

“We sit here and just open up to one another – the good, the bad and the ugly,” Perez says. “We put the elephant in the room. It’s that safe space where people can share what they want to share. There’s no judgment. We just tell each other, ‘Hey, I’ve been there.’”

For Perez, MVP came at the right time. His transition from sailor to civilian was difficult. He’d been fired from various jobs, was fighting substance abuse and anger issues, and generally lived in a daze. “It felt like quicksand. The more you try, the more you sink.”

MVP gave Perez his footing and helped him see he wasn’t alone in the transition process. Hearing other veterans’ stories made him realize that it’s OK to struggle, he says. “It’s OK to feel how you’re feeling. In the civilian world, we say certain things or react a certain way, and people look at us like we’re crazy. We’re just so used to a certain kind of culture. With MVP, it brings like-minded individuals (together). We save each other and help each other out in any way we can: sharing resources, a simple phone call, text, go hang out, things like that.”

That’s what Boyer likes to hear. A veteran of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, he spent three years as the University of Texas long snapper and played briefly for the Seattle Seahawks in the 2015 NFL preseason.

“I know how hard it is to transition out of something like that, to have a locker room and a community, a specific mission and purpose and identity, and then to not have any of it,” he says. “It’s hard for us, because we’ve been trained to suck it up and drive on, don’t ask for help. It’s easy for us to fall through the cracks, and let ourselves go physically and mentally.”

“(With MVP), it’s consistent. Every week we meet up. We train together. We fight together. And then we talk about stuff. It’s hard to want to open up to people who haven’t been through something similar. This provides a space for us to do that. And it all stays here. That’s really what it is. There’s no magic beans or secret sauce. It’s just being here for one another.”

BUILDING A TRIBE Marine Corps veteran Krishna Flores experienced military sexual trauma that resulted in post-traumatic stress disorder after leaving the service in 2008. A member of Palisades American Legion Post 283, she’s been participating in the MVP program for a year and a half.



During a recent "fireside chat," Army veteran Gene Han received a hat and T-shirt for attendance achievements in the Los Angeles MVP program. Photo by Erick "Doc" Andino

Being around the program's male veterans is "kind of like exposure therapy for me," Flores says. "I get a lot of anxiety. I'm still working through those symptoms. We all come with a lot of weight on our shoulders. We get to put it on the floor in a punching bag, and then we get to sit down and really lay out our heart."

It's also given her the opportunity to meet other female veterans. "There's not a lot of us out there," she continues. "If I can meet more of them, I can continue to build my tribe and my network and support group."

Andi Ward, another member of Palisades Post 283, served in the Navy from 2007 to 2010. She came to MVP last February and enjoyed it so much she rearranged her entire schedule so she could could keep coming back.

"When you walk in the room you almost feel like you're back in the military," Ward says. "People doing things together, sweating together, going through stuff together."

Workouts facilitate a strong chat session, she adds. "Because there's a physical aspect at the beginning, you form this bond with each other that you just can't form in any other therapy session. You really feel like you know these people. You feel like you can trust them. You've just sweated with them for an hour. It just gives you this bond with them. You feel like you've been friends forever."

Jacob Toups, MVP's executive director, says the program's physical and mental portions are interdependent. "There's amazing evidence about how physical fitness opens people up," he says. "It makes you vulnerable. If you took away the physical fitness part, I don't think our peer mentoring would be as effective. It has to be both things together."

'THE HUMAN INSIDE US' At Xtreme Couture MMA in Las Vegas – owned by former UFC champion, Army Airborne veteran and MVP board member Randy Couture – a similar mix of veterans and athletes gathers on Fridays to grow physically and mentally. The latter has been especially helpful for former NFL player Gerome Sapp, a high school All-American in 1998 who went on to play for the University of Notre Dame and then had a five-year NFL career with the Baltimore Ravens and Indianapolis Colts.

With a finance degree from Notre Dame and an MBA from Harvard Business School, Sapp tried to enter the entrepreneurship world after the NFL but was unsuccessful, leaving him depressed. "I lost my identity," he says.

Then he met Noel Huerta, program coordinator for the new MVP program in town. Sapp immediately found the outlet he'd been needing since leaving professional football – and with a group of people with whom he feels a connection.

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Air Force veteran Mitch Jones spars during an MVP session at Xtreme Couture MMA in Las Vegas. Photo by Ronda Churchill

"I'd always had an affinity for the military," Sapp says. "A lot of times professional athletes and those who enter the military come from the same socioeconomic backgrounds. And with MVP, we're all looking for something we had before, whether in sports or in the military. The ability to interact with other people who share that need has really been therapeutic in a nontraditional way."

Huerta, a Marine Corps veteran who served in Afghanistan, was with MVP at the ground floor in Las Vegas. He's seen the program make a huge difference in less than two years.

"There are (veterans) who are displaced, alone, who didn't have a place to be themselves and open up to each other and show how great they really are," Huerta says. "We really wanted to give that to everybody ... create that unity we once had."

The results are like something out of a Hollywood movie, he adds. "Seeing guys who were really close-minded and didn't want to be around people, and how they change – seeing where they're able to put their ego aside and work as a family – it's amazing. You see the human inside us."

For Leo Garcia, 55, MVP started as a way to take off weight. His doctor told Garcia, an Air Force veteran and member of American Legion Post 8 in

Las Vegas, that he was getting heavy. After joining the program, Garcia lost 25 pounds in two months. The program has also been a stress reliever.

"I needed something to release all the pressure that I go through," he says. "I run four nonprofits. This was a great release for me. My wife noticed that my demeanor totally changes when I come home because I take it out on the bags or on the mat."

Like others who have found MVP, though, the benefits for mental health have meant the most. "The peer-to-peer portion of the program is great, because what's said here stays here," Garcia says. "(Veterans) mental health care at our facility (in Las Vegas), they're just overwhelmed. Three months later you may have a new doctor. (At MVP), they're building a community, and that community stays here, and it grows. You know you can always reach out to someone here." ☮

Steven B. Brooks is social media manager for The American Legion.

Learn more about Merging Vets & Players:

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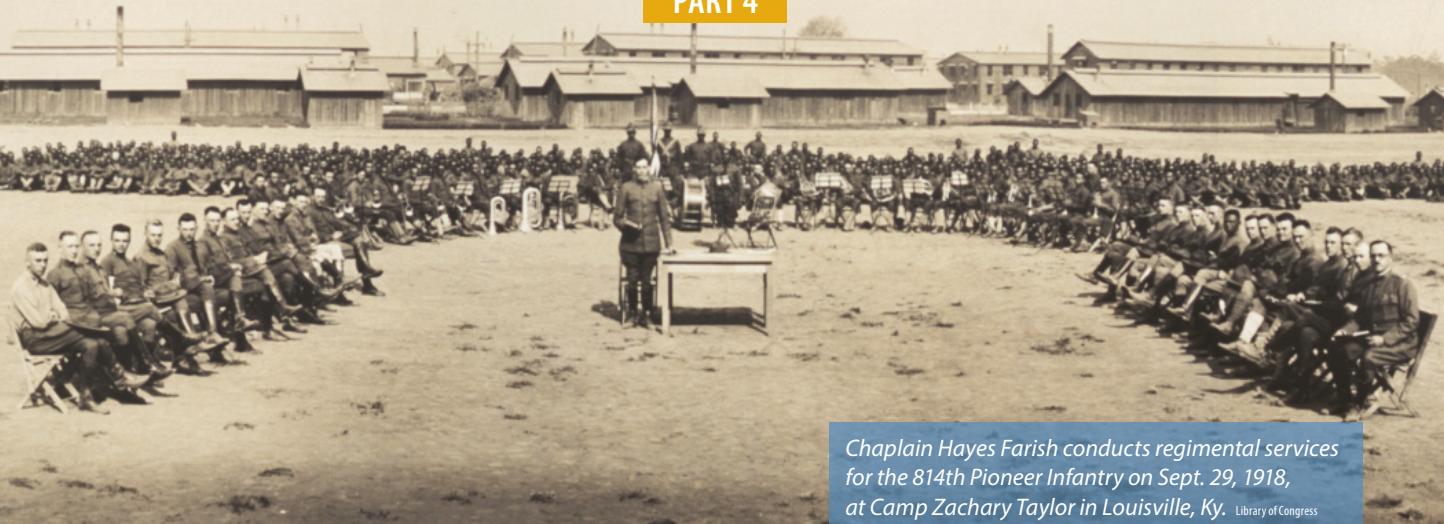


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TO STRENGTHEN A NATION / THE AMERICAN LEGION STORY

PART 4



Chaplain Hayes Farish conducts regimental services for the 814th Pioneer Infantry on Sept. 29, 1918, at Camp Zachary Taylor in Louisville, Ky. Library of Congress

'FOR GOD AND COUNTRY'

Past national chaplain reflects on the founding spirit of The American Legion.

BY TIERIAN "RANDY" CASH

THERE WAS LITTLE DEBATE, IF ANY, regarding whether to include "For God" in the Preamble to The American Legion Constitution, adopted at the St. Louis Caucus in May 1919. To the Legion's founders, service to country was service to God, and service to God was service to country.

When the organizers sought spiritual leadership for the newly formed veterans group, not surprisingly they turned to military chaplains for guidance. Chaplains had shared the hardships and suffering of the soldiers, sailors and Marines in the trenches of the Great War. They knew the emotional and psychological toll combat had taken on them.

Four chaplains – a Roman Catholic, an Episcopalian and two Baptists – were instrumental in the founding of The American Legion and provided a spiritual underpinning for the new organization. These four – Charles H. Brent, Francis A. Kelly, Thomas H. Wiles and John Washington Inzer – helped

chart a course of service for God and country. Representing different faith traditions, these men unselfishly and in a nonsectarian manner skillfully guided the religious and patriotic principles of individual obligation to the community, state, nation and God.

Bishop Brent was American Expeditionary Forces (AEF) Gen. John J. "Black Jack" Pershing's chaplain and senior chaplain for the AEF. At The American Legion's formative Paris Caucus in March 1919, Brent put the connection between God and country this way:

"It was a great soldier who said that the army has not merely a body but a soul and a conscience

as well. I believe the conscience of the army is speaking in this committee's report. I believe the army's soul is speaking in it. I was present on Saturday, at the beginning of this caucus, and I will tell you frankly that I was fearful at that moment, lest you should create a great mechanism without adequate purposes. My fears have been wholly allayed and I see in the report of your committee the ideals not only of the army but of the nation adequately expressed, and I wish to tell you gentlemen that so far as I have any ability to promote this great movement I give you my most hearty support. I believe that the army of today, when it goes back to citizen thinking and citizen acting, will be capable of contributing to the commonwealth of the United States, so as to change the character of the whole country and lift it up to a higher plane of political, industrial and religious life."



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"It was a great soldier who said that the army has not merely a body, but a soul and a conscience."

AEF Senior Chaplain Bishop Charles Brent,
speaking at the Paris Caucus, March 17, 1919

Two months after the Paris Caucus, wartime veterans in the United States gathered in St. Louis to finalize plans for The American Legion. They did not immediately catch on to the spirit of the Paris Caucus, which had deliberately refused to take action on broad questions of policy until veterans at home were consulted. The inability to come to consensus on critical issues threatened the very existence of the new organization.

Baptist Rev. Inzer, a revival preacher and Army chaplain originally from Texas, was a member of the founding executive committee of The American Legion. In St. Louis, he delivered an impassioned message that saved the day and prevented the Paris spirit from being lost on the St. Louis crowd. In part, he said, "Now, the keyword that I want to say in the beginning is, at all costs we want to save this organization. We do not want anything to

arise today that will in any way mar the spirit of this great assembly and the work that it is going to do in the future. While you were deliberating here these past two days, some of you thought only of this hour and this moment. But gentlemen, I had an eye cast into the future, and I was dreaming dreams and seeing visions of the years that are to come and the wonderful work, the wonderful influence, and the mighty power that this organization is going to have and exert upon this nation and upon the whole world, and I want you to think of it in these terms ...

"Gentlemen, I want to say just here, if you can only think about this Legion ... as the jewel of the ages, I believe that is the best interpretation I know. I cannot say anything greater than this: I believe God raised up America for this great hour. I can say that the strong young man of the time is to be The American

Legion in this country and in the world."

Some might say the Legion's founding principle of service to God and country is a dialectical ambiguity, or even a conflict of interest, supporting principles of peace and war alike. After all, isn't faith and religion, in the end, about peace and studying war no more?

"Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you."

"If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also"

Not exactly fighting words.

But, of course, we all know there is more to it than that. As one chaplain friend of mine once said, "We are all peacemakers. We just have different roles."

We human beings were created for lives of peace but find ourselves living in a dangerous and often destructive world, and so we depend on the strength of

"Our first duty is, beyond the shadow of a doubt, to get this boy on his legs, and once we get it on its legs, it will be like the mighty Niagara Falls. There is not anything in the world can dam it up. It will be a power that shall be known, and with influence all over America, and for good all over the world. Let's be quiet and let's be sensible today until we get this boy on his legs. He's just a recruit, a raw recruit, and he has to be trained, and we are going to do that thing now."

Chaplain John Inzer, Alabama, speaking about the formation of The American Legion at the St. Louis Caucus, May 10, 1919



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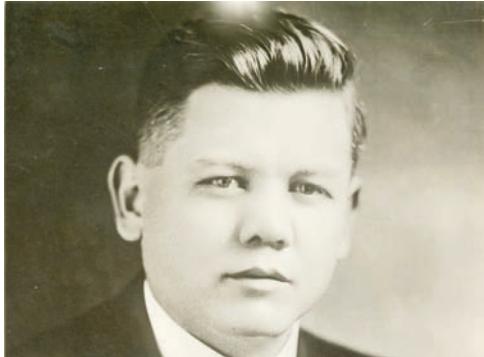
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"... religion permeates every walk and activity of life – socially, morally, patriotically, educationally, industrially, and every other way – making each of these phases of Legion life more meaningful. There is scarcely a post that does not have its sick, its unemployed, its discouraged, its indifferent members. The Chaplain can assist greatly by bringing the gospel of good cheer and encouragement, not merely as a preacher, but as a good fellow, a warm friend and a true comrade."

National Chaplain Earle A. Blackman, "Why is a Legion Chaplain?",
American Legion Weekly, June 9, 1922

the military to resist evil and create conditions where justice and peace can thrive. It's like the Marine who once said to me, "Chaplain, if you were doing your job better, I wouldn't have to be doing mine."

Another chaplain put it this way: the world only needs two kinds of people to keep it safe and at peace, warriors and chaplains. The chaplain calls the world toward nonviolence as the only way to heal a terrifying and violent world. The other, the warrior, does God's work by defending civilized society and those who are vulnerable. Our world needs both prophets of peace and responsible warriors. As my friend said, "The chaplain is needed to keep the warrior honest, and the Marine is needed to keep the chaplain alive."

It is not trite to say that we live in a very challenging time. Yet I remain thoroughly convinced that America is a miraculous gift of God. It is not the new Israel or the kingdom of God on earth. But at the same time, it is too unlikely to be an accident, and too wonderful to be of our own doing.

Surely no nation in history has provided such opportunity for individual freedom and quality of life alike to all its citizens. And just as surely, no nation in history has given so much and been of such positive benefit to

the other nations of the world. America's very existence proclaims, protects and defends the vision that freedom and peace may be experienced throughout the world.

Those who would subject the people of the world to their inhumane control must first block from the oppressed the light of freedom and hope that shines so brightly in us. The determination of our enemies to knock down our towers and attempt to cripple our inspiring American influence is, in fact, a twisted acknowledgement of America's great and enduring value to the world.

That we live in America is, in itself, an act of grace. We may have come into it naturally – born into it – or were welcomed as immigrants and naturalized. By either route, America has been, for every one of us, a stupendous gift – a country built collectively by cherishing us individually; a country built of the effort of servicemen and women, statesmen, farmers and factory workers, those who toiled on the railroad and those who bankrolled it. Our philosophers, politicians and preachers, all together, created something bigger than any of us. And then they gave it to us.

Any true gift is infused with opportunity and responsibility that arises from it. An inherent

talent, a good education or money in the bank can all cry out to the blessed, "What will we make of this? What will we do individually? What will we do collectively in light of how many have done so much, and sacrificed so much, for us?"

The founders of The American Legion, warriors and preachers alike, understood the greatness of the gift. Soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines and Coast Guardsmen over the past century have secured that gift in times of threat and war.

The motto of my Navy Chaplain Corps is "Vocati Ad Servitum." This means "called to serve."

The spirit of that motto has guided The American Legion for nearly 100 years now, all the way back to the earliest founders, four of whom were chaplains who not only embraced, but demanded, that the first words out of our mouths every time we gather to celebrate the gift of America and The American Legion are "for God and country." ☸

This essay is an adaptation of a message delivered on Aug. 30, 2015, at the 97th American Legion National Convention in Baltimore, when Tierian "Randy" Cash was serving his first term as national chaplain. Cash is now adjutant for the Department of North Carolina.

News Flash....

Government Gets Something Right



Super Light Titanium Timepiece Loses Only One Second Every 20 Million Years.

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Super Light Titanium has two big advantages over steel. One is corrosion resistance and the other is that titanium has the highest strength-to-weight ratio of any metal, which means that titanium is approximately 45% lighter than steel. But every other titanium watch that we can

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LORE OF THE LEGION

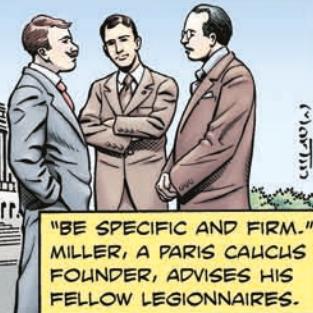
STORY: JEFF STOFFER
ART: GARY MARTIN
COLOR: MARCUS ESKOW

LESS THAN FIVE WEEKS AFTER THE AMERICAN LEGION'S FIRST NATIONAL CONVENTION, COMMANDER FRANKLIN D'OLIER CALLS ON DEPARTMENT LEADERS FROM AROUND THE COUNTRY TO MEET HIM IN WASHINGTON TO LOBBY CONGRESS FOR WHAT HE CALLS "BENEFICIAL LEGISLATION."

DISABLED AND PSYCHOLOGICALLY INJURED WORLD WAR I VETERANS HAD BEEN SENT TO PUBLIC HEALTH HOSPITALS, INSANE ASYLUMS AND EVEN JAILS DUE TO A LACK OF FEDERAL FACILITIES OR ANY RESPONSIBLE AGENCY TO HELP THEM.



HELPING LEAD THIS FIRST WASHINGTON REHAB CONFERENCE ARE FORMER U.S. REP. THOMAS W. MILLER AND FUTURE LOBBYING LEGEND JOHN THOMAS TAYLOR.



"BE SPECIFIC AND FIRM." MILLER, A PARIS CALLUS FOUNDER, ADVISES HIS FELLOW LEGIONNAIRES.

D'OLIER RALLIES THE LEGION LEADERS IN WASHINGTON WHO STORM CAPITOL HILL, EN MASSE.

THE LEGION IS SUCCESSFULLY LAUNCHED, BUT WE HAVE ONLY JUST BEGIN TO SCRATCH THE SURFACE. WE HAVE AN ENORMOUS TASK AHEAD OF US.



HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF VETERANS ARE UNEMPLOYED.



FAMILIES ARE BROKEN UP, AND THE CHILDREN OF VETERANS ARE SENT TO ORPHANAGES.



FEDERAL SUPPORT AGENCIES TO HELP VETERANS ARE SCATTERED AND DYSFUNCTIONAL.

D'OLIER TELLS HIS CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION A HARD REALITY FROM AMERICA'S TRACK RECORD OF VETERAN SUPPORT. "IT IS NOT HARD FOR SOME TO GO TO WAR WHEN THE VISION OF THE WORLD IS CENTERED UPON THE WARRIOR IN UNIFORM. IT IS HARDER TO FIGHT THE QUIET AND LESS SPECTACULAR FIGHT FOR THOSE SAME IDEALS AT HOME... IN THE ORDINARY WALKS OF LIFE."

MEMBERS OF CONGRESS DECIDE TO HOST A DINNER TO GET TO KNOW THE NEWLY FOUNDED AMERICAN LEGION A LITTLE BETTER.

ON DEC. 16, THE LEGION LEADERS ARRIVE FOR THE DINNER ON CAPITOL HILL. THEY COME PUSHING THE WHEELCHAIRS OF DISABLED COMRADES FROM WALTER REED ARMY HOSPITAL. SOME ARE ON CRUTCHES, HAVING LOST LIMBS IN THE WAR. OTHERS ARE BANDAGED WITH HEAD INJURIES.



WE INVITED SOME OF OUR FRIENDS TO JOIN US.

THEY HAVE SOME THOUGHTS ON THE SWEET BILL. THESE MEN ARE ONLY 20 MINUTES FROM YOUR CAPITOL.

THE FOLLOWING DAY, U.S. SEN. REED SMOOT OF UTAH CALLS D'OLIER TO HIS OFFICE.



WE'VE MADE SOME AMENDMENTS.

CONGRESS RAISES COMPENSATION FOR DISABLED VETERANS FROM \$30 TO \$80 PER MONTH AND UNEXPECTEDLY PASSES THE SWEET BILL BEFORE CHRISTMAS. THE AMERICAN LEGION HAS ITS FIRST LEGISLATIVE VICTORY UNDER ITS BELT.

NEXT: THE LEGION AND THE TOMB OF THE UNKNOWN SOLDIER!

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— Janet F.

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Artist Matt Hall signs a centennial lithograph for Rodney Smith of South Dakota during the 100th National Convention in Minneapolis. Photo by Schelly Stone

ARTIST CONNECTS LEGACY & VISION

The style of former video game art director Matt Hall matches the message of the Legion's 100th anniversary.

Matt Hall of Dripping Springs, Texas, was trained as a traditional painter – oils, watercolors, acrylics – and inspired by Frederic Remington, Norman Rockwell and N.C. Wyeth, the latter two of whom were past illustrators for *The American Legion Magazine*.

His talent took him from greeting cards and children's television to Hollywood movie sets and the massively successful video game "Medal of Honor," shifting to the emerging world of digital art. He has produced no fewer than six illustrations for *The American Legion Magazine* and was chosen as the artist of two new works that hang in the National Executive Committee room of American Legion National Headquarters in Indianapolis. Signed lithographs of his American Legion centennial image, titled "Legacy & Vision," are available now through Emblem Sales.

As he was conducting research for his 2018 American Legion art pieces, he spoke with *The American Legion Magazine*.

How did you become a military artist?

It didn't start that way. I was in the entertainment industry and was working for DreamWorks in California. While there, Steven Spielberg came up with an idea to launch a video game project called "Medal of Honor." The name was a sticking point with the Congressional Medal of Honor Society. There was a debate over whether we could use the name or not. We worked out a deal with the Congressional Medal of Honor Society to maintain their website for them – and to actually depict some of the stories from the citations. I volunteered to do the paintings.

What kinds of paintings are these?

These are digital paintings, all painted on a digital tablet. We had to turn these around sometimes in a week, and we had to be very fast-paced in how we maintained that website, and I was doing

production on other projects too. What I try to do is maintain a traditional look, when I'm working even in a digital format. I'm trying to create an oiled look, even if it's not for canvas.

How do you determine the scene you want to create?

First and foremost, I consider myself an illustrator. It really begins with the written word, whether the story of someone's act of valor or a script or an article. I will read it and pick out a moment that illustrates or tells that story.

Where did your interest in military art come from?

My father served in the Army, in the artillery. He raised me to respect and have a love and passion for men and women in the service, particularly because he came out of the Vietnam era. I remember seeing how a lot of those veterans were treated, and he lectured

me about how this should never happen again: "You should always honor a veteran. No matter what you think about the politics. They deserve better." I think that gave me a sense of respect for the military, and was reinforced through the process of working with the Congressional Medal of Honor Society.

Then, my wife's family has a history in the military. Her father was a Green Beret. Her grandfather was a B-17 pilot. So I think it's a culmination of a lot of people who influenced me.

I love history. Because I love history, I love telling stories. And that requires a lot of research. If you get one little detail wrong, a veteran knows. They know that equipment inside and out. It's worth that extra effort to research.

What does it mean to you to produce artwork for *The American Legion*?

For me, it's an honor to serve The American Legion through my art. I grew up looking at pieces that were commissioned by *The American Legion Magazine*. N.C. Wyeth has done several pieces. I remember looking at those – even as a young man – and thinking, 'Oh my gosh ... that work is fantastic.' I don't feel like I am in that caliber, but I am honored to be one of the artists who has served The American Legion over the past 100 years.

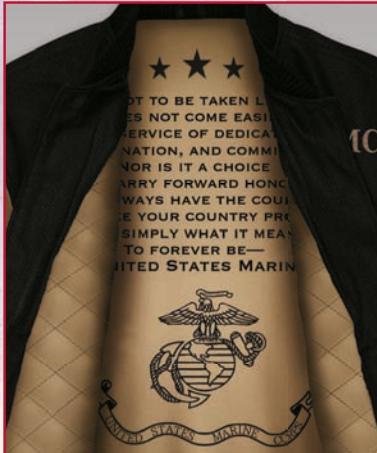
– Jeff Stoffer

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HISTORY

Christmas Eve at the front

In 1943, a special radio broadcast united Americans with their loved ones deployed around the world.

BY DON KEITH

The night before Christmas 1943, millions of Americans sat before their radios, the dial lamps offering a bit of cheer, awaiting a show scheduled to begin at the top of the hour. It was one of those rare media events, usually reserved for President Franklin D. Roosevelt's "fireside chats." But on that one winter night, all four major U.S. radio networks – CBS, NBC Red, NBC Blue and Mutual – devoted their airwaves to a single program featuring several amateur singers and musicians, along with jokes and sketches.

That radio broadcast, "Christmas Eve at the Front," gave U.S. audiences a real-time glimpse of soldiers and sailors deployed around the globe that holiday season, and to give those servicemembers the opportunity to speak to the folks back home via the fastest-growing mass medium of the day.

Technicians had worked for months to pull off a feat thought impossible only a few years before: bringing live voices from various spots around the world to a single point and rebroadcast to eager listeners at home. The first trans-Atlantic telephone cable was still a decade away. Communications satellites were the stuff of science fiction. This big show depended on relatively new technology and the vagaries of shortwave signal propagation.

It was actually the idea of the U.S. military, which believed a real-time broadcast would be a tremendous morale boost not only for the fighting forces but also for their families back home. And when it came time to select the program's primary host, the choice was obvious.

At the time, Bob Hope's network radio show commanded huge audiences each week. He had started his showbiz career on the vaudeville stage, and by 1934 was already working in radio and the movies. His first major film was "The Big Broadcast of 1938," in which he introduced the song "Thanks for the Memory." It became his theme, closing hundreds of Hope's USO shows between 1941 and 1991.

However, the first voice heard in the "Christmas Eve at the Front" broadcast is not Hope, but actor Lionel Barrymore, whose portrayal of Ebenezer Scrooge in the annual radio production of "A Christmas Carol" made it appropriate that he be a part of the show. He promises to take listeners "by the hand to the side of your loved ones fighting at every quarter of the globe" – including Italy, North Africa, New Guinea, Guadalcanal, New Caledonia, China ("where it's already Christmas"), India, Panama, Alaska, Pearl Harbor and even "some of the ships of our Navy."



Getty

Barrymore then introduces Hope, "whose name is synonymous with joy to the GI." When greeted with loud applause, Hope quips, "Thanks, relatives!" After a few zingers, the most challenging part of the production begins.

The first stop is Algiers in North Africa. The signal fades a bit at times, but an unidentified voice tells us it is just after 3 a.m. as he reads from a prepared script. He informs listeners that this will for the most part be a typical day for the men working there. A soldier from Sheffield, Ala., comes on mic and, in a deep Southern accent, talks about how he and his fellow troops spent Christmas Eve so far from home.

It is difficult for us today – accustomed as we are to high-definition live communications from anywhere on the planet – to imagine how impressive this short, wavering presentation was to millions sitting in living rooms around the country. Indeed, most had recently heard Edward R. Murrow as he dramatically described the Nazi bombing of London live, as it happened, using a shortwave transmitter. But the voice the audience was hearing this night was that of a soldier, a regular guy, whose distant transmission wraps with, "We return you to America." There may well have been some wishful thinking in those five simple words.

Bing Crosby, Hope's usual foil and movie partner, joins the broadcast then, along with the Army Air Force Orchestra, with a quick chorus of "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen."

Except for atmospheric noise and some fading, most of the remote shortwave transmissions were surprisingly listenable. Others were difficult to understand. Some transmission paths did not work at all. Hope, Crosby and crew handled it smoothly, ad-libbing, until they could verify there would be no bit from that "quarter of the globe."

Despite expected technical hitches, this historic broadcast almost certainly accomplished its goal. Families felt a bit closer to their loved ones – more than 3.5 million Americans were deployed overseas at the time of the show – on this special night of the year.

"Christmas Eve at the Front" can be heard today in its entirety – blemishes and all – online, including on YouTube and the Old Time Radio Downloads site.

Don Keith is a best-selling author and award-winning broadcast journalist. donkeith.com

Read an extended version online: legion.org/magazine

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Photo by Lucas Carter

FALL MEETINGS**Team 100 off and running**

American Legion National Commander Brett Reistad opened the National Executive Committee's Fall Meetings Oct. 12-15 in Indianapolis by encouraging members to spread the word about his "Team 100" centennial theme.

"Whether you are a longtime member or brand new, everybody has had a part in our century of success, and we all have a stake in the future of this organization," he said.

Reistad called on posts to gather their American Legion Family and post videos on social media identifying their posts and yelling, "We are Team 100!" When posting videos, tag Brett Reistad and use the hashtag **#team100**.

"Branding and awareness are important, and a part of our strategic membership plan," Reistad said. "I know I'll be seeing plenty of Team 100 challenges all over social media."

While nearly 5,400 Legion posts chartered in 1919 are still active today, Reistad is encouraging departments to help charter new posts, which will be designated as 2019 centennial posts. He recognized the Department of Alabama for chartering the first of these posts.

Speaking ahead of Veterans Day and the 100th anniversary of the end of World War I, Reistad reminded Legionnaires that "we must not forget this is still a time of war." He identified Spc. James A. Slape, 23, of Morehead City, N.C., as the latest casualty in the ongoing war on terrorism. Slape was killed in Afghanistan by an IED Oct. 4.

"This is why we exist: to advocate for heroes like Spc. Slape and the grieving families they leave behind," Reistad said. "We exist not just to support families of the fallen, but Blue Star Families and our American Legion Family, as well."

During the NEC's final session before The American Legion turns 100 in March, Reistad added, "If we wish to finally turn a corner on membership, now is the time to do it. You do this not by relying on membership notices and direct mail. You get people to (join) and renew because you are directly engaging them. By working together, valuing each other, regardless of war era, service branch or background ... we are a stronger American Legion."

Expanded membership eligibility, other resolutions

The Legion's National Executive Committee passed 25 resolutions during the Fall Meetings, including:

■ **Resolution 1**, "Unrecognized Armed Hostilities Recognition," which calls on Congress to declare that the United States has been continuously engaged in a state of war from Dec. 7, 1941, to the present, and for Congress to direct VA to qualify as a wartime veteran any servicemember who served honorably under Title 10 for at least one day from Dec. 7, 1941, to the present.

■ **Resolution 2**, which would change The American Legion's membership dates, but only once the actions of Resolution 1 are approved by Congress. Once approved, American Legion membership will comprise the following war periods: April 6, 1917, to Nov. 11, 1918, and Dec. 7, 1941, to the date of cessation of armed hostilities as determined by the U.S. government.

■ **Resolution 3**, which kicks off the American Legion Endowment Fund's \$25 million fundraising drive, doing business as the American Legion Veterans & Children Foundation. All contributions go directly to the Temporary Financial Assistance program and Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation efforts, primarily training for American Legion service officers who help veterans and families understand their health-care and education benefits. Make tax-deductible contributions online at legion.org/donate.

The full text of all American Legion resolutions is online: archive.legion.org



National Commander Brett Reistad accepts a \$500,000 check for the American Legion Veterans & Children Foundation. Photo by Lucas Carter

\$24,000 Donations to The American Legion's Operation Comfort Warriors program during the meetings, including more than \$22,000 from the Department of Indiana

\$766,761 Amount in 2019 grants from the American Legion Child Welfare Foundation, to 24 nonprofits nationwide

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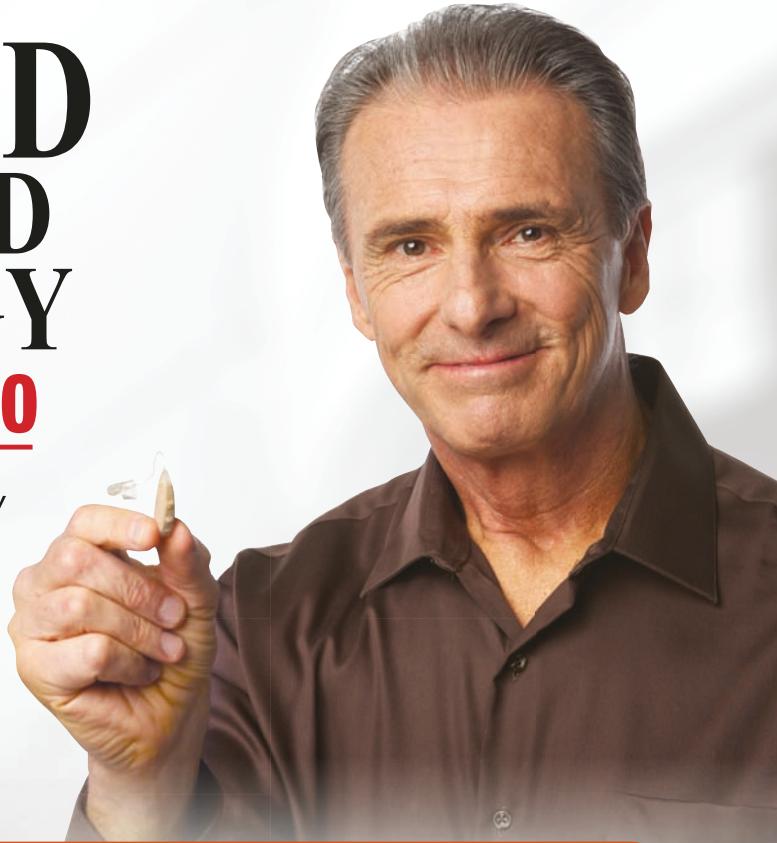
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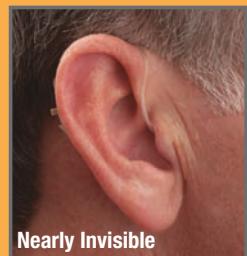
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SCHOLARSHIPS

Moving on, with help from The American Legion

As a high school senior, Kenneth Wilder was thrilled to be accepted to the College of William & Mary in Williamsburg, Va. The cost of higher education, however, was daunting.

"When I got the news that I received the American Legion Legacy Scholarship, I was more than ecstatic," said Kenneth, a junior ROTC student and two-time scholarship recipient. "Knowing who donated to the scholarship for kids like my sister and me to go off to college is awesome."

The American Legion Legacy Scholarship is awarded to students like Kenneth and his sister, Mariah. Children of post-9/11 servicemembers killed on active duty are eligible. So are children of post-9/11 servicemembers who have a combined VA disability rating of 50 percent or greater. The 2019-2020 application period opened Nov. 15.

Kenneth is studying government with a minor in Arabic at William & Mary. Mariah, a freshman at Virginia Wesleyan College in Virginia Beach, is studying psychology.

"We're the select few in tragedy, but we're also the select few in blessing," says Kenneth, who wants to pursue a law degree after getting his bachelor's. "Even though my father is no longer with us, he hasn't been forgotten. By donors honoring both his legacy and our cherished memories ... It brings a lot of joy to us."



Thanks in part to the American Legion Legacy Scholarship Fund, siblings Kenneth and Mariah Wilder can pursue higher education. Photo by Schelly Stone

Kenneth Jerome Jones, who served in the Army National Guard, was struck and killed by another driver while changing a tire on the side of the road on Oct. 26, 2003. He'd been home barely a month from a deployment to Iraq.

Mariah was 6 at the time. Their mother, Grace, was pregnant with Samuel, now a high school freshman.

"I remember the nights when my mom was crying and crying," Kenneth says. "You could feel the void."

Mariah says she appreciates those who contribute to the Legacy scholarship: "These people really care."

—Henry Howard

See a video about the Wilders: legion.org/legiontv

Learn more about the Legacy Scholarship:

legion.org/scholarships

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NEW HEIGHTS

After retiring from leading the South Carolina State Guard, Tom Mullikin is ready for global challenges.

BY W. THOMAS SMITH JR.

Tom Mullikin is a veteran Army officer and Legionnaire who equates military service to the second greatest commandment, "to love your neighbor as yourself."

That's how he's approached his command of the South Carolina State Guard (SCSG), a post from which he retires this month. It also guides his work as a practicing energy and environmental attorney, university professor and global expedition leader.

"Approaching everything we do in the spirit of serving others is the only real formula for any tangible success at anything," says Mullikin, a member of American Legion Post 172 in Columbia, S.C. "It's like when you climb a mountain – if it's a truly challenging summit, you simply cannot do it by yourself. Your life depends on others, on keeping them fit, alive, focused and, if possible, happy. And they have to do the same for you."

A National Geographic expert and Explorers Club fellow, Mullikin has summited peaks around the world, including four of the seven greatest: Mount Elbrus (the highest mountain in Europe), Mount Kilimanjaro (the highest in Africa), Mount Kosciuszko (the highest on the Australian mainland) and South America's Mount Aconcagua (the highest in the Western and Southern hemispheres).

He hopes to tackle the remaining three – Mount Denali (formerly McKinley, the highest in North America), Mount Vinson (the highest in Antarctica) and, finally, the 29,029-foot Mount Everest in Asia – in his quest to climb all seven summits and scuba-dive in all five oceans.

He has already logged the dives, including ice dives in the Arctic and Antarctic, and he's a certified polar diver.

Again, though, it's about teamwork.

"You are never truly successful if you cross the goal line alone," Mullikin says. "The greatness of any leader or achiever is measured by the numbers of people they lead into the end zone with them."

It's a simple-sounding philosophy that has guided Mullikin in leading the SCSG since he took over in 2014, and one that he credits in taking the organization from "good to great to elite."



In 2016, Tom Mullikin led a National Geographic expedition to Alaska, from Denali to Prince William Sound. Photo courtesy Tom Mullikin

When Mullikin became commander, the historic guard was struggling with relevancy. Not to be confused with the state's Army National Guard or Air National Guard (both of which also fall under the umbrella of the South Carolina Military Department), the SCSG is an all-volunteer military organization tasked with statewide missions. It often augments the National Guard and other SCMD elements in state disaster-relief services and related operations.

"We had some really good people who were ready, willing and able to take us to the next level," Mullikin says. "I tried to make them feel better about who they were by encouraging them to a higher standard and pointing them back to the greatness of their 17th-century militia forebears."

Recent years have brought newfound recognition of the SCSG as having developed one of the finest search-and-rescue capabilities in the nation. Another key to success has been a surge in recruiting, as well as the retention of professionals – military veterans, law-enforcement officers, physicians, attorneys, engineers, chaplains, business leaders, professors, even professional musicians – who have committed themselves to serve their state without pay.

In federal service, Mullikin was a Judge Advocate General (JAG) Corps officer with the Army Reserve's 12th Legal Support Organization, where he served as a trial counsel. He then served as international legal officer for the 360th Civil Affairs Brigade (Airborne).

Mullikin speaks at American Legion posts about various topics, as well as civic clubs, community organizations, and college and high school ROTC programs about the Legion. He's also a strong supporter of American Legion Baseball.

"At the end of the day," he says, "any worthwhile effort may be summed up in the simple military maxim: mission first, then the men (and today women), lastly me."

W. Thomas Smith Jr., a former Marine Corps infantry leader and counterterrorism instructor, is a member of American Legion Post 172 in Columbia, S.C.

Read an extended version online: legion.org/magazine

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THE GREAT WAR 100

HONOR & REMEMBRANCE

'What a time for true peace on earth'

Editor's note: Throughout the Great War's centennial, The American Legion Magazine will publish excerpts from the letters of D.B. "Bernard" Ryan of Albion, N.Y., who served as an Army infantry officer and helped found American Legion Sheret Post 35 in 1919.

DEC. 13, 1918

Well, I don't expect to make New York by Christmas this year – not unless I got a special ship, like the President, but when I do get home we must have a holiday in New York. I have my doubts that we will land there, but rather expect that as we are arriving in winter (as we hope and not so late as springtime) that we will disembark near and go to a Southern camp. But one can't tell. I suppose the process of demobilizing a division will take two weeks to a month. On the other hand, we may be sent directly to Hoboken, march up 5th Ave., then to Camp Merrill or Mills or Upton or Dix. It is all speculation, which is revived here today with rumors that we are to go home soon. I doubt them all, especially in view of today's announcement that the formal peace conference is postponed to Jan 3rd.

This was an inspection day for us and here at Brigade Hdqrs we have sat about in a high state of expectancy for an inspector who has not yet arrived. Each of the infantry regiments had reviews followed by a very thorough inspection, but we could not attend as we constantly expected a call ourselves. While we missed the reviews, we heard the National Anthems tonight. It was the first day in two weeks that it has been fair enough to bring out the colors and the band. I stood and listened and thought of the inspiration all who witnessed today's ceremonies in Paris must have had, just as I was inspired by the playing and the company at salute. Surely, surely we must mean it all – we, as nations, must be sincere, now if never before. What a time for true peace on earth and good will.

DEC. 24, 1918

My detachment will do as it did at Thanksgiving – go to the hotel, where they will have a turkey dinner. By gleaning around at two or three sales commissaries, I have secured a package of chocolates and one of lemon drops for each man and also cigarettes and cigars for the dinner, which I will pay out of the detachment fund. But I expect that we will all be thinking of home and shan't be very, very jolly. Which reminds me of mistletoe and holly. We have quite a bit of the former collected, our men having shinned up some very tall and highly trimmed trees to get bunches of it hanging 50 feet or more from the ground.

And so will pass Christmas – making what cheer we can and longing for home, every one of us. My 27th Christmas. My 1st away from you. But we should be well resigned to this separation and absence from home by now, for it has been our prospect since long before we sailed. And think what dismal things were in prospect, which we have been spared!

Tomorrow I will open the two little packets you had so neatly wrapped – the cake and the – I am sure it is Maillard's Chocolate – tomorrow!



Love, Son

HONOR HIS PAST. SECURE HER FUTURE.

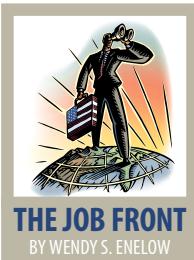
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CAREERS



THE JOB FRONT

BY WENDY S. ENELOW

What's your personal brand?

One of the latest trends in writing résumés, LinkedIn profiles, cover letters and other career communications is personal branding. This is a process whereby you create a personal branding statement that showcases your unique selling proposition (USP).

Think of your branding statement as the overriding theme of your résumé – the theme that pulls all your experience together under one umbrella and clearly communicates, "This is who I am and this is the value I bring to your organization."

To create your own personal brand, follow these steps:

- Define your career objective.
- Identify your top three to five skills, qualifications and achievements that support your objective.
- Clarify your success traits as they relate to your objective.
- Combine the highlights of that information to write your personal branding statement – a single sentence, phrase or tagline that communicates your unique value.

Branding statements can be presented in a number of different formats and structures. Here are a few examples to help you formulate your own:

LOGISTICS MANAGER

Optimizing advanced technology to enhance productivity, efficiency and quality

ELECTRONICS ENGINEERING PROFESSIONAL

Designing best-in-class product engineering solutions for aerospace, defense and commercial markets

TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT PROFESSIONAL

Developing Curriculum & Instructional Materials for Classroom, Online & Video Training

FIELD OPERATIONS MANAGER

Champion of People, Projects & Resources who Consistently Exceeds Performance & Financial Objectives

In today's world of online job-searching, LinkedIn is a must for every job seeker. Therefore, you must transition your personal brand statement from your résumé to your LinkedIn profile, where there is a 120-character limit. This may require you to edit your brand statement to fit into the allocated space.

It is essential that your résumé and your profile "match" closely so that there is consistency around your brand on all of your communications. In fact, you can even include it in your cover letters, email signature block and any other documents. Let your personal brand lead the way throughout your job search.

Wendy Enelow is co-author of "Modernize Your Résumé: Get Noticed...Get Hired" and "Expert Résumés for Military-to-Civilian Transitions."



Cheryl Walker, 19th District commander, left, and LeQuita Christmon of Auxiliary Unit 559 honor Sgt. William Frank Earnest of the 370th Regiment. Photo by Diane Nesbitt

CENTENNIAL

Post 559, Champaign, Ill.

In September, William Frank Earnest American Legion Post 559 conducted a memorial service marking the 100th anniversary of the death of its namesake.

Sgt. Earnest served with the 370th Infantry Regiment, 93rd Infantry Division. He was killed in combat in the Argonne on Sept. 17, 1918, the first African-American from Champaign County to die in World War I. The chaplain of the 370th called Earnest "one of the most excellent, exemplary soldiers that I have known in my twenty and four years' service. His body, poor, bleeding, torn and mutilated, was buried in No-Man's Land by his comrades." His remains were later moved to the Oise-Aisne American Cemetery in France.

Post 559 was founded by Earnest's older brother, Robert, and other veterans, and chartered in 1932.

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www.legion.org/centennial

MEMBERSHIP

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Freedom Post 911, Tulsa, Okla. Chartered Sept. 26 (15 members)

Hammond Veterans Memorial Post 5, Hammond, La. Chartered Sept. 18 (15 members)

Post 111, Eagle Mountain, Utah Chartered Sept. 17 (11 members)

Scenic City Heroes Post 291, Chattanooga, Tenn.
Chartered Aug. 16 (15 members)

Post 210, New Haven, Conn. Chartered July 25 (15 members)

Southwest Post 332, Halethorpe, Md. Chartered July 25 (15 members)

Tate Lawrence Post 81, Melbourne, Ark. Chartered July 31 (15 members)

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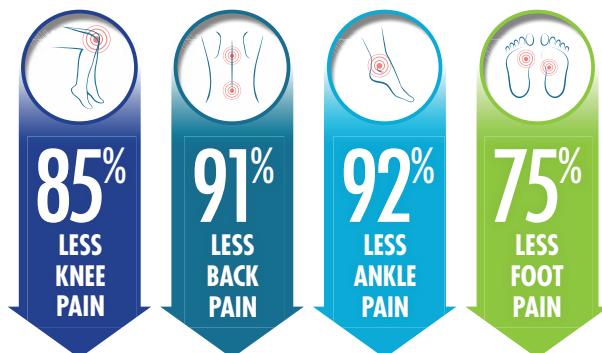
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HONOR & REMEMBRANCE

Group eyes site for GWOT memorial

For years, the Global War on Terror Memorial Foundation has been pushing to build a memorial in Washington, D.C., honoring those who served in the nation's longest war – particularly those who made the supreme sacrifice.

In 2017, the same year that Congress officially authorized the foundation's efforts, The American Legion's National Executive Committee passed Resolution 16 supporting the memorial's construction.

Heading the GWOT Memorial Foundation is Michael "Rod" Rodriguez, president and CEO. He spent 21 years in the Army, including the Green Berets. Rodriguez remembers how enlistment numbers skyrocketed after the 9/11 attacks. "I think everyone was reminded of their patriotism," he says. In the military, he realized his passion was to serve others, leading to his involvement in the foundation.

The GWOT Memorial Foundation has a leadership team, advisory board and set of ambassadors, with President George W. Bush acting as honorary chairman. "We wanted a



diverse group of people who understand and support the mission," Rodriguez says.

The 2017 congressional resolution passed the House in just six months. For war memorials, there is usually a 10-year embargo on construction starting from conflict's end. Given the ongoing nature of the war on terrorism, elected officials waived that requirement.

The foundation is now turning its attention to fundraising, site selection and design. It's eyeing a spot in Area 1, near the White House, the National Mall and other war memorials. As for design, focus groups are being conducted around the country. The goal is to "offer a space inviting to everyone."

Rodriguez envisions the memorial as a popular site for re-enlistment, retirement and other ceremonies, noting that this will not be a 9/11 memorial. "It's about what we did afterwards," he says.

— Laura Edwards

 gwotmemorialfoundation.org

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PERSONAL FINANCE



How to talk to your aging parents

FOCUS ON FINANCES



J.J. MONTANARO

My wife and I have spent the past quarter of a century caring for our kids. We've done our best to equip them with all they need to be happy, successful and productive. It won't be too long – but I hope not too soon! – before they are called into action to look out for us. Like it or not, that's the way it is. Heck, we are experiencing

this shift in roles with our own parents. It may not be fun, or even comfortable, but you need to be ready.

That starts with some frank conversations. If you're not sure where to kick things off, try these six questions to facilitate important discussions with your aging parents.

■ Have you formalized a "what-if" game plan? I wrote "what-if" but "when" is a more accurate characterization. Your parents probably have at least an idea of what they would like to see happen if they are incapacitated or pass away, but a mere idea isn't enough. To make things happen according to their wishes, they need to draft or update a suite of legal documents that may include wills, trusts, powers of attorney (both medical and financial) and living wills.

■ Who is doing what? Whether they are naming an agent to make decisions, selecting an executor or naming a successor trustee, everyone should be on the same page.

■ Does your plan need to be dusted off? Your parents may have answered yes to question 1, but if they drafted their documents decades ago, it could be time for a refresh. Tax laws have changed dramatically, and it could also make sense to re-establish their intent with respect to powers of attorney. A financial institution may be less likely to recognize a

25-year-old power of attorney than one drawn up a couple of years ago. As you take another look at these important documents, be sure all beneficiary arrangements reflect your parents' current wishes and are synchronized with the other means by which their assets will be distributed.

■ What type of insurance do you have? I know my mom has a long-term care policy, but only because I sold it to her. Get a firm grasp of your folks' life, long-term care and health insurance policies. A survey of their insurance could identify gaps or unnecessary coverage. It could be that policies purchased decades ago don't make sense now – or that new ones should be considered.

■ Who do we need to contact? If your parents already have a letter of instruction documenting their key contacts (attorneys, accountants, etc.) and providers (banks, brokerages, insurance companies, etc.) in a single document or notebook, that's fantastic. If not, ask them to write one. Are there special programs or services they're eligible for? Perhaps they should go through the VA pre-need burial eligibility process. As USAA members, take advantage of services offered through the Survivor Relations team.

■ How should we handle things when you're gone? This is an open-ended topic, but ground you can cover might include your parents' desire on a wide range of topics, including preferred burial location, cremation, type of service and obituary details.

J.J. Montanaro is a certified financial planner with USAA, The American Legion's preferred provider of financial services. Submit questions for him online.

✉ www.legion.org/usaa/focusonfinances

BY THE NUMBERS

A digital world

2.2 billion

Estimated number of cellular phones sold in 2018

\$101.3 billion

Estimated amount spent on video games in 2018

4.04 billion

Estimated number of Internet users as of the end of 2018

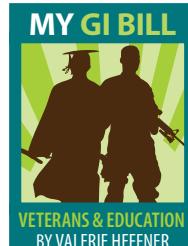
2.133 trillion

Estimated number of Google searches in 2018

Source: worldometers.info

EDUCATION

VA reimbursement for testing



Q: I would like to use my GI Bill for the College-Level Examination Program (CLEP) for English, math and history. Will I receive a monthly housing allowance when I pass the exams for these courses, and will I be reimbursed for the tests' cost?

A: VA will reimburse all mandatory fees charged for all national tests for college credit – CLEP, SAT, ACT and MCAT – up to \$2,000 per test. There is no limit on the number of tests taken. When you're reimbursed for the

tests, your months of entitlement will be reduced based on the cost. However, you will not receive a monthly housing allowance when you complete the CLEP exams; to receive that allowance, you must be enrolled and attending courses at a college or university.

Valerie Heffner is a Marine Corps veteran and member of American Legion Post 27 in Apache Junction, Ariz. askvalerie@legion.org

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^ Quality of Life Survey data measured the patient's self-assessed quality of life and measurable quality of improvement at three months.

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COMRADES

How to submit a reunion

The American Legion Magazine publishes reunion notices for veterans. Send notices to **The American Legion Magazine, Attn: Reunions, P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206**, fax (317) 630-1280, e-mail reunions@legion.org or submit information via our website, www.legion.org/reunions.

Include the branch of service and complete name of the group, no abbreviations, with your request. The listing also should include the reunion dates and city, along with a contact name, telephone number and e-mail address. Listings are publicized free of charge.

Your notice will appear on our Web site within a week and will remain available online until the final day of your reunion. Upon submission, please allow three months for your reunion to be published in print. Due to the large number of reunions, *The American Legion Magazine* will publish a group's listing only once a year.

AIR FORCE / ARMY AIR FORCES

Air Force Public Affairs Alumni Assn, North Charleston, SC, 4/25-27, John Terino, (703) 239-2704, johnterino@afpaaa.org

ARMY

1st Plt D Co 2nd Bn 5th Cav 1st Cav Div, Mundelein, IL, 3/30-31, John Hodge, (812) 453-7667, jdhodge44@yahoo.com; **70th Eng Bn (Cbt) (Vietnam)**, Branson, MO, 9/12-15, Roger Rock, (775) 623-1029, 70engrs@gmail.com; **88th Trans Co (An Khe, Vietnam),** La Porte, IN, 3/8-10, Butch Weston, (219) 363-5374, rhonda_weston@yahoo.com; **95th Evac Hosp (Vietnam, 1968-1973)**, Tucson, AZ, 5/2-5, Terry Caskey, (828) 464-2610, mickthec@hotmail.com; **278th Regimental Cbt Team**, Pigeon Forge, TN, 3/14-17, Jimmy Small, (865) 333-8843, jimmy@mcminnfarmersmutual.com; **359th Trans Co (Vietnam)**, Oshkosh, WI, 6/11-15, John Porter, (432) 267-1733, crowbar.1@comcast.net; **471st Trans Co (Desert Storm)**, Gatlinburg, TN, 8/8-12, Brian Simms, (580) 713-9864, brian151@hotmail.com; **508th MP Bn**, Branson, MO, 5/2-6, Don Henderson, (765) 654-5288, dhoink@sbcglobal.net; **Army Counter Intelligence Corps Vets**, Yorba Linda, CA, 5/8-11, Stan Solin, (714) 998-1562, stan83@live.com

COAST GUARD

Edisto WAGB 284, New Orleans, 6/10-14, Glenn Smith, (321) 362-5284, glenndsmith@att.net

JOINT

Pleiku AB - 1st, 6th & 9th Air Commando Sqdns, 362nd Tact Electronics Warfare Sqdn, 21st Tact Air Support Sqdn, 633rd Special Ops Wing, Air America Crews, Army Surgical Hospital (Camps Schmidt & Holloway), Dayton, OH, 9/4-8, Ron Chromulak, (412) 515-7247, ron1bev@comcast.net

NAVY

Brownson DD 518/868, Virginia Beach, VA, 5/8-12, Thomas Holcomb, (218) 750-1533, ussbrownson1972@gmail.com; **Edisto AGB 2**, New Orleans, 6/10-14, Glenn Smith, (321) 362-5284, ussedisto@cfl.rr.com; **Lawrence DDG 4 & DD 250**, San Antonio, 5/1-5, Craig Bernat, (814) 322-4150, dguts@usslawrence.com; **Massey DD 778**, Savannah, GA, 5/5-8, Gordon Risk, (248) 650-5138, gordonteri@outlook.com; **Monticello LSD 35**, Branson, MO, 10/16-20, Robert Behm, (573) 207-4670; **Nicholas DD/DDE 449**, Charleston, SC, 10/23-26, Bill Linn, (928) 246-7927, bill.margie@yahoo.com; **NMCB 4**, Branson, MO, 4/25-28, Dean Jaeger, (402) 499-5289, kjaeg@aol.com; **NSA Da Nang, Vietnam**, Albuquerque, NM, 4/22-27, Bernie Uhrinek, (724) 353-9627; **Picking DD 685**, Chicago, 10/1-5, George Brunson, (608) 290-1835,

**STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP,
MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULATION**
(Required by 39 U.S.C. 3685)

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2. Publication Number: 0886-1234
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 700 N. Pennsylvania St.,
 Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

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 700 N. Pennsylvania St.,
 Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

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 700 N. Pennsylvania St.,
 Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

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 Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

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13. Publication Title: The American Legion Magazine

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15. Extent and nature of circulation:

	Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months	Actual number of copies of single issue published nearest to filing date
a. Total number of copies printed	1,871,526	1,850,253
b. Paid and/or requested circulation		
1. Paid/Requested outside-county subscriptions stated on Form 3541	1,862,918	1,841,577
2. Paid in-county subscriptions	0	0
3. Sales through dealers and carriers, street vendors, counter sales, and other non-USPS paid distribution	4,241	4,194
4. Other classes mailed through the USPS	0	0
c. Total paid and/or requested circulation (Sum of 15b (1), (2), (3), and (4))	1,867,159	1,845,771
d. Free distribution by mail		
1. Outside-county as stated on Form 3541	3,732	3,843
2. In-county as stated on Form 3541	0	0
3. Other classes mailed through the USPS	0	0
e. Free distribution outside the mail	0	0
f. Total Free distribution (Sum of 15d and 15e)	3,732	3,843
g. Total distribution (Sum of 15c and 15f)	1,870,891	1,849,614
h. Copies not distributed	635	639
i. Total (Sum of 15g and h)	1,871,526	1,850,253
j. Percent Paid and/or Requested Circulation	99.80	99.79

I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete.

Jeffrey Stoffer, Publisher

Notices should be sent at least six months prior to the reunion to ensure timely publication.

Other notices

"In Search Of" is a means of getting in touch with people from your unit to plan a reunion. We do not publish listings that seek people for interviews, research purposes, military photos or help in filing a VA claim. Listings must include the name of the unit from which you seek people, the time period and the location, as well as a contact name, telephone number and e-mail address. Send notices to **The American Legion Magazine, Attn: "In Search Of," P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206**, fax (317) 630-1280 or e-mail **reunions@legion.org**.

The magazine will not publish names of individuals, only the name of the unit. Listings are published free of charge.

Life Membership notices are published for Legionnaires who have been awarded life memberships by their posts. This does not

include a member's own Paid-Up-For-Life membership. Notices must be submitted on official forms, which may be obtained by sending a self-addressed stamped envelope to **The American Legion Magazine, Attn: Life Memberships, P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206**.

"Comrades in Distress" listings must be approved by the Legion's Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation division. If you are seeking to verify an injury received during service, contact your Legion department service officer for information on how to publish a notice.

To respond to a "Comrades in Distress" listing, send a letter to **The American Legion Magazine, Attn: Comrades in Distress, P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206**. Include the listing's CID number in your response.

"Taps" notices are published only for Legionnaires who served as department commanders or national officers.

thebrunsons@hotmail.com; **Picuda SS 382**, Savannah, GA, 5/13-17, Larry Rose, (970) 379-0734, subman421@yahoo.com; **San Diego CL 53/AFS 6 & T-AFS 6 & Air Dets LPD 22**, Norfolk, VA, 5/23-25, Walter Cox, (330) 262-7667, wvcox915@aol.com; **Satyr ARL 23 & LST 603**, Baton Rouge, LA, 5/16-20, Charles Massey, (410) 883-3361, ctbwonder@verizon.net; **Wabash AOR 5**, San Antonio, 5/2-5, Phil Hawkins, (843) 482-1964, paiphjh@outlook.com; **Yosemite AD 19**, Savannah, GA, 5/1-4, William Krug, (352) 419-6620, w.krugiii@gmail.com

LIFE MEMBERSHIPS

Post 219, FL: Harold K. Witherby

Post 440, IN: Warren Hamstra

Post 113, NC: Paul G. Frye, Hubert F. Hinson, William S. Martin

IN SEARCH OF

3rd Plt B Trp 1/4 Cav 1st Inf Div (Vietnam, 1967-1968), James "Straw" Stauffacher, (254) 592-7718, buckingmule@yahoo.com

420th FA Grp HB, 531st & 532nd FA Bn (Saipan, June 1944), David Hirsch, boffin0356@gmail.com

592nd Sig Co Berlin Cmd (Germany, 1965-1967), Jesse Rodriguez, (773) 426-7556, jesse.rod@comcast.net

A Co 3/41 Inf 2nd Armd Div "Rabid Dogs" (Fort Hood, TX & Garlstedt, Germany, 1985-1988), Phillip Stock, (251) 504-2928, rabiddogs2000@yahoo.com

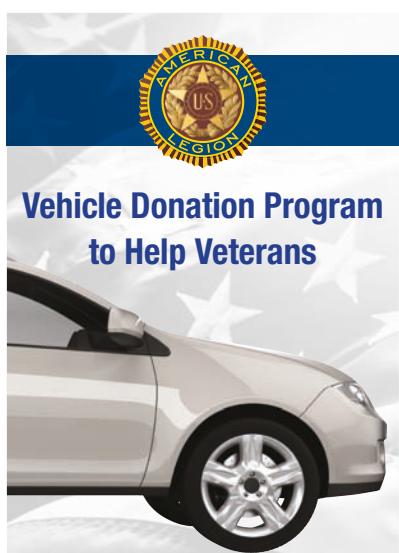
FLSU 2 (Phu Bai, Vietnam, 1966-1968), Larry Stegall, larry.stegall@hotmail.com

L Co Rangers, 75th Inf 101st Abn Div (1984-1985), Alfred Lee, (505) 713-0085

TAPS

Richard Reed, Dept. of Mississippi. Dept. Cmdr.

2001-2002, Nat'l Foreign Relations Cncl. Vice Chmn. 2000-2001 and Nat'l Sec. Cncl. Vice Chmn. 2002-2009.



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It's beginning to cost a lot like Christmas.

THIS HOLIDAY SEASON, in lieu of gifts, I've decided to give everyone my opinion.

'TWAS THE NIGHT before Christmas, and all through the house, everyone was on their phones.

THE OFFICE CHRISTMAS PARTY is a great opportunity to catch up with people you haven't seen in 20 minutes.

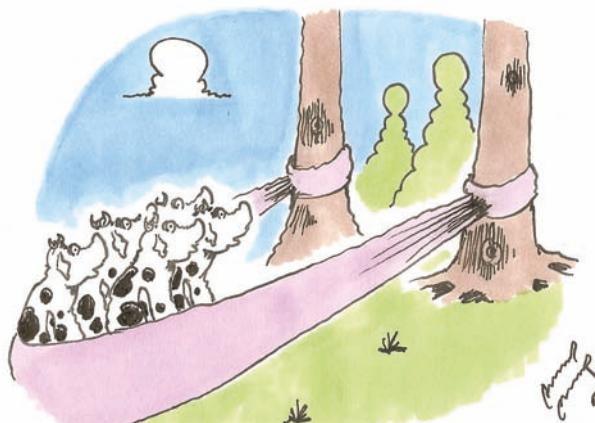
AT 1 A.M., the police stopped an old man in questionable condition.

"What are you doing out so late, sir?" the police officer asked.

"I'm going to a seminar on the harmful effects of alcohol," the man replied.

"Right," the officer said sarcastically. "Who would hold a seminar like that at this hour?"

The man sighed. "My wife."



"The herd shot around the world"

WHILE ON MANEUVERS in the Mojave Desert, our convoy got lost, forcing our lieutenant to radio for help.

"Are you near any landmarks that might help us locate you?" the base operator asked.

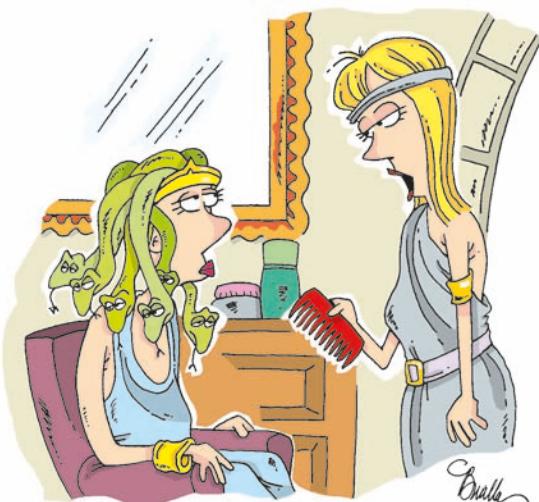
"Yes," said the lieutenant. "We are directly under the moon."

— Submitted by Jesse Joe Wingo, as published in Reader's Digest's "Humor in Uniform"

Do you have a funny military-related anecdote? To share with Reader's Digest, visit rd.com/submit. Remember to include your American Legion post name and number.



"Did I mention the heated seats?"



"Have you tried a venomous conditioner?"

AN UNDERTAKER notified a man on vacation that his father-in-law had died, and asked whether he should bury, embalm or cremate him. The answer was quick: "Take no chances. All three."

ACUPUNCTURE is a jab well done.

WHY DID THE DINOSAUR cross the road? Because the chicken hadn't evolved yet.

I USED TO BELIEVE that the brain is the most important organ. But then I thought, "Hey, look who's telling me that."

"THE FDA is launching a new campaign against teen vaping, because we all know if there's one way to get kids to stop smoking, it's hearing from all those cool cats at the Food and Drug Administration." — Jimmy Fallon

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